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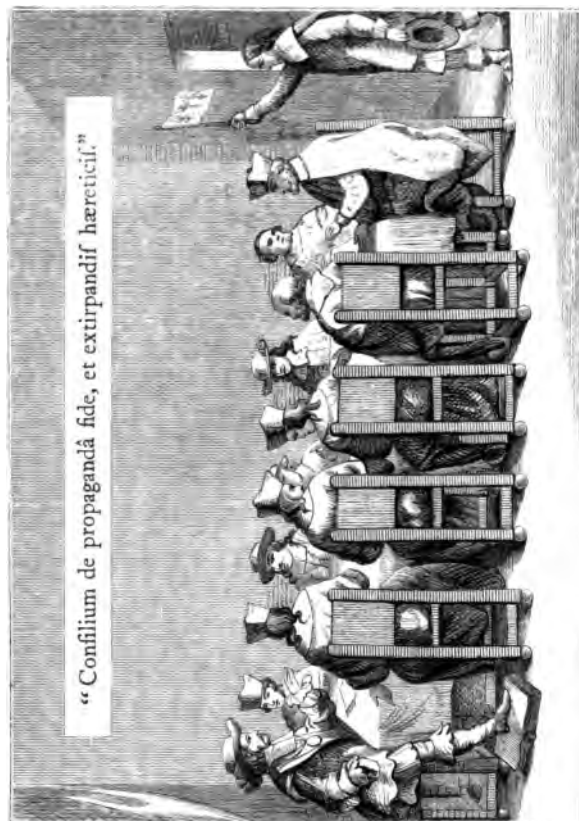
THE SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

An Historical Romance,

FOUNDED ON THE HISTORY OF THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH

DURING THE YEAR 1685, COMMONLY CALLED

"THE YEAR OF MASSACERS."



“Confilium de propagandâ fide, et extirpandis hæreticis.”

From an original engraving.

Q. Now, you said that you were not sure whether or not you were in the room at the time of the shooting.

A. I am not sure whether I was in the room at the time of the shooting.

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THE
SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

An Historical Romance.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM BRAMLEY-MOORE, M.A.,
INCUMBENT OF GERARD'S CROSS, BUCKS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN BY T. H. NICHOLSON, ENGRAVED
BY C. W. SHEERES.

"Valdenses liceat mihi veteris Christianæ purioris ecclesiæ semen vocare."
BEZA, A.D. 1560.

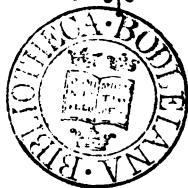
IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

LONDON :
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, AND GREEN.
1864.

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250. 6. 28.

HARRILD, PRINTER, LONDON.



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VOL. II.
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THE
SIX SISTERS OF THE VALLEYS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH OF CENTURIES.

CHURCH of the Mountains! Church of the Valleys! At once the eagle and the dove! Thou hast set thy nest in a rock, and for thy worship Nature herself hath reared a shrine. Wondrous in thine antiquity! Wondrous in thy purity! Wondrous in thy martyrs! Wondrous in thy littleness! Wondrous in thine invincibility! Wondrous in thy solitude, amidst the apostacies of nations!

Had an apostle surveyed Europe in the twelfth century, his eye might have rested with complacency on the crystal pinnacles of Monte Viso, whose snows and crags

would not unfaithfully have typified the purity and steadfastness of the Vestal Church, which worshipped at its base.

When the last of the ten Gothic kingdoms became subservient to the See of Rome ; when superstition, ignorance, and error deluged the Western Empire ; when Germany was a black forest from Savoy to the Baltic ; when the Moor held the sunny vineyards of Andalusia ; when Islam received its check on the plain of Tours ; when the Saxon bowed before his images, this hidden Church of the Valleys breasted the flood of Rome's corruptions ; for the truths which had first echoed in Jerusalem and Antioch, and had there waxed faint, rang with no uncertain sound upon the slopes of the Alps, from generation to generation :—

“ *Extrema per illos,
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.*”

Mother of the reformed Churches of

Europe, thyself unreformed, thou dost wed us to antiquity. In the year 1100, thou hadst thy protest, before Luther convulsed Europe, or the technical term was begotten at Spires.

The Churches of the Val Louise, Barcelonnette, Saluces, Provence, Calabria, Pragela, have been utterly destroyed by that Church whose olive wand is the sword, and whose rubrics are written in blood. But thou hast triumphed over the onslaughts of ages, abiding as a Witness for the Almighty.

Let us unroll the map of Europe. Monte Viso is but a speck, and these valleys are not visible; but they have wielded an influence, and challenged an interest that kingdoms could not boast.

This mountainous district is little known to the explorers of the hidden corners of the earth, yet its glens have been the treasury of truths which, when divulged, have convulsed the myriad-peopled city with the throes of spiritual life.

The banks of the Rhine and the Danube, the remote provinces of Spain and Calabria, the plains of France, have felt the majesty and force of the truth which lay hidden, like the grain of mustard seed, in the secluded Valley of Lucerna.

Church of the Alps, thy history may be collected from thy crags! Thou art a proof that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and that the weakness of God is stronger than men!

Ye Cottian Alps, ye have a lustre beyond the Graian, Maritime, Pennine, Rhetian, Noric, and Julian groups, because your shattered pinnacles, though red with blood, have been the shrine of truth.

Truth, love, and liberty—inspirations which descend from heaven, where your great Original dwells—the virtuous soul yields willing homage to your omnipotence. United, ye can move a world; your triumphs are moral, and therefore glorious; ye can arm the widow against the iniqui-

sitor, and cause the child to smile upon the frowning executioner. Glorious relics of the past, let the past bequeath you to us from the ashes of our fathers, and we stand freemen in the sight of heaven and earth! Glorious heralds of the future, in your triple union we discern earth's millennial renovation, and in the world to come a true eternity of bliss!

CHAPTER II.

CONSILIUM DE PROPAGANDA FIDE ET EXTIR- PANDIS HÆRETICIS.

THE scenes with which January closed had become matters of history, and the edict of Gastaldo had brought desolation into its limited sphere of operation, when the Council of the Propaganda determined upon further efforts for the complete extirpation of the heretics in the valleys of the Alps.

It was about the middle of April, 1655.

In the palace of the Archbishop of Turin, an assembly of nobles had met on urgent business. It consisted of ten persons—the Marquis of Pianesse, the Archbishop, the Grand Chancellor, the Papal

Delegate Gastaldo, the Count Christopher, De la Mèna, Confessor of his Royal Highness the Duke of Savoy, the Prior Rorengo, and one or two other *signori eccellentissimi*.

"My Lords," said the Marquis of Pianesse, who presided at the head of the table, "I need not occupy your time by stating the object of our meeting. The name of this blessed brotherhood, instituted by Pope Gregory XV., in 1622, declares our mission, while its last clause, added since the year of jubilee, is a pledge of our increased zeal. You are aware, my lords, that I have lately lost the Marchioness," and as he said this his voice faltered. "I received from her a dying charge to propagate our holy faith in those neighbouring valleys, or to uproot that cursed race of heretics. It would, indeed, be a source of glory if we could tear them from those rocks to which they have clung from time immemorial, despite all our efforts."

“Our duty to the Church, and to our laws,” rejoined the Archbishop, “urge us forwards. I need hardly remind you of the passage in the *Statuta Sabaudicæ*, under the title *de Hæreticis et sortilegis*. Perhaps the delegate will read the extract.”

Gastaldo then read as follows :—

“Judices Ecclesiasticos Ordinarios.

* * * * *

Unà cum suis in hac parte fautoribus et receptoribus, consiliariis et adjutoribus viriliter prosequantur, eos capiendo, incarcerando, et puniendo, precibus, pretio, timore, amore, etc., totaliter prætermittis.

“Mandamus insuper Officiariis nostris, præfatis per Judices Ordinarios et Inquisitores Hæreticæ pravitatis circa executionem hujusmodi sui officii auxilium requirendis, ipsis promptè et sine difficultate præstent.

“Et ne defectu impensarum, dicti Inquisitores, prætendant remissius agere, volumus et ordinamus quod de, et super,

bonis Hæreticorum, expensæ suppeditentur, etc.”

(Statute Book of Savoy ! Thy faded ink is still legible, and bears witness in the sight of heaven and earth !)

“ Ah, that’s what I like,” said Rorengo to himself; “ our expenses are to be paid at their cost, and our little patrimony increased by the confiscation of the heretics’ property. Good ; I must work while there is the chance, and it shall not be the Prior’s fault if he can’t scrape something to increase his pension for old age.”

“ My lord,” said De la Mèna, raising his voice, “ this is not only the law of the land, but the express command of the Scriptures, to which the heretics are always referring. There is the verse as expounded by our Holy Father Bellarmine — ‘ Rise, Peter, kill and eat.’ ”

“ Again,” added the Delegate, “ there is the decree of the Council of Trent, in the ‘ *Damnatio Errorum Wicleffi, Hus et Lu-*

theri. Damnamus, reprobamus atque omnino rejicimus, Hæreticos comburi esse contra voluntatem Spiritûs.' ”

“Thanks for your quotations,” replied the Marquis, smiling; “now to leave the abstract, and to turn to the practical. We have come to discuss the best means of uprooting those heretics; we have tried stratagem and cajolery to little purpose.”

“Then we must try a more violent plan,” interrupted the Grand Chancellor; “we must see if we cannot sweep them off as one man. Can we not make use of the French soldiers of Grancey, who are still quartered in the valleys?”

“Our stratagem,” answered the Marquis, “failed before. Grancey was instructed to take up his quarters there, and they were secretly told that it would be an act of treason to admit him; they were prepared to resist, and the collision had nearly taken place, when that fellow Léger interposed:

and when the written order of Madame Royale came, they received the troops quietly enough."

"A curse upon those Apostolicals," growled Rorengo; "the firing of the Convent of Villar, that also came to nothing. We had a better handle in the assassination of the priest at Fenil."

"But that, likewise, failed; it was done by the murderer Berru at the instigation of Count Ressay."

"True; but these charges are religious capital for us. You make a strong accusation which thousands hear, and not a tenth of them hear the explanations or refutations, so that there's a balance in our favour. Now this last charge against them is current in Italy, and there is a general odium felt against them for it, so that it has served our turn in a great measure. You know they are popularly charged with sorcery, witchcraft, and child-murder."

"Do you believe the crimes you hear of

them, father?" whispered Placido Corso to Rorengo.

"Of these apostolical dogs? No, I can't say I do, though I live among them, and hate them like the devil."

"I wish that I were as good a Christian," replied Placido Corso, "as the generality of them. You know what Louis XII. of France said to his officers about the branch on the other side of the Alps—'By the Holy Mother of God, these heretics whom you urge me to destroy, are better than you, or myself, or any of my subjects.' And you've heard, I dare say, the proverb in Holland, 'He does not swear, he is a Lutheran; he does not live riotously, or drink, he is of the new sect.'"

"Hush," said Rorengo, with a knowing smile, "speeches like these want a wrench of the thumbscrew; we must order your *san-benito* if you vindicate the heretics. But I allow," continued he, "that in morals and life they are good, true in

words, and unanimous in brotherly love, but their faith is incorrigible and vile."

"I pity the devil if he's on the rack, and you've the handle," retorted the other, with a sneer. "You should explain how it is that their faith is so bad, and their fruits so good."

"What about your edict, Gastaldo?" inquired the Marquis. "We thought that would have given us a fair pretext for crushing them, but they obeyed it, I hear. Did they not turn out in the middle of January?"

"They did, my lord; they left their property within the three days."

"And how many came over to us?"

"Not one out of two thousand exiles has recanted; such obstinacy is positively a phenomenon in morals."

"It must have been cold work if the frost pinches the Apostolicals as it does us," interposed Rorengo.

"Serve them right," said the Marquis, twisting his wiry moustache. "Murder is

a crime we could forgive, but not Protestantism, for heresy is the catechism of the devil. But the pretext we must keep before the world is their rebellion—that they refuse submission to the Duke's orders, and resist his troops.”

“I fear no one will believe this. The world knows that they have been always loyal, if the Duke leaves them liberty of conscience. ‘Shew us the Duke's order,’ said Léger, ‘and you may march over our bodies.’”

“I look,” replied the President, “to the unlearned, who are the mass of mankind. Few have time or patience to go into hair-splitting questions. State a thing positively, and nine-tenths will believe it, and never hear it contradicted. Rebellion is the charge which we must keep before the world, in case any of the other states are inclined to interfere. We had hoped they would have resisted Gastaldo's order, and have given us a pretext for crushing them.”

"What course do you propose, Marquis?" inquired De la Mèna.

"Don't consult me, consult my learned friend, the Archbishop of Turin, he will give us sound counsel, tempered with godly charity. Ask the Holy Fathers, the Delegate Gastaldo, and the Grand Chancellor."

"Innocent VIII. and his blessed Bull, that's my weapon," exclaimed the Dominican Prior. "Monks, to your crucifixes! and soldiers of the cross, to your swords! as Pope Julius would have said."

"How can it be done," asked the Chancellor, "so as not to need repetition?"

"We have Grancey and his troops, we can use them, and they will bear part of the blame. Then, Archbishop, there is a brigade of Irishmen, Catholics, whom Cromwell has turned out of Ireland—they would be just the men for this sort of work."

"So I ween," said the Archbishop, with a twinkle in his eye, "they have an innate

love of breaking heads, and they have already had some practice at home in killing heretics: they're furious for the Pope; his Holiness should have them as his body-guard—they would make the Vatican safer than it has been."

"I can have Galeazzo and his city guards," continued the Marquis, "and a number of regulars. Altogether, I could gather fifteen thousand men; and plenary indulgence, and division of profits, will bring us a good band of outlaws, or we can open the prison doors, and let Barabbas earn his expiation."

"*“Plenariam peccatorum indulgentiam,”*" said the Archbishop, "are the words of Innocent VIII. in his Bull for all *‘cruce signatis ac contra hæreticos pugnantibus;*' but, Marquis, what would be your tactics?"

"The thing is to quarter our soldiers in every house, and on the appointed day——"

"But excuse my interrupting you," said

the Archbishop ; " how are we to locate them ? "

" Appeal to their loyalty. Tell them the Duke only needs this proof of their fidelity, and I think they'll receive our troops. "

" What then ? "

" Why, then having blessed your banners, give your signal, and let your soldiers do their duty. "

" But what do you mean ? " asked Placido Corso, with alarm, " that they should massacre them all ? "

" Precisely so. Your Catholic soldier will not need much education in that line—give him the sword, show him the victim, and let the friar cry God speed, and I will engage that he understands the signal. "

" Good, " said Rorengo, rubbing his hands together. " Destroy this apostolical brood, and those wretched Calvinists can boast no connection with the primitive Church. "

" But you forget Europe, " interposed

De la Mèna. "What will Europe say?"

"We must shut the mouths of Europe by showing that they are rebels, and that they have earned a little paternal chastisement. A document or two will be all they will do on the subject."

"I can't say I like the scheme," added the corpulent Placido; "I think I shall have a broken night's rest to the day of my death; I shall be hearing them screaming in the night."

"Nonsense, father, look to history. Why, a hundred years ago we had the Count de la Trinité doing the same thing."

"Yes, but this cold butchery is different from war."

"The Inquisition knows no leniency to heretics," said Rorengo. "Read our rubrics, remember our precedents."

"When do you think of carrying out your programme, Marquis?"

"Easter would be a good time. We

must make a regular Bartholomew of it again. That was a glorious victory, Chancellor. How many perished, my Lord Archbishop, as you are well versed in facts and figures?"

"In France alone there perished sixty thousand."

"We can't quite equal that, for these heretics only number about twenty thousand; but still I think by my measures we might extirpate them like those in the Marquisate of Saluzzo, in Calabria, and elsewhere."

"Have you seen their deputies, Marquis?"

"No; what use is there in reading protests and answering them? To save appearances and to gain time, I've kept them in Turin, but I shall give them the slip, and be off to the valleys, while they are knocking at my gate. Did you give them an audience, Signor Gastaldo?"

"No, I have kept out of their way. I

told my servant to send them back to you, or to our friend here, the Archbishop."

"Well, gentlemen, are you agreed? Do you see any better plan than that which I have had the honour of submitting to your notice? If so, I should be glad to hear it on its merits."

"No, yours carries the palm, Marquis. What day will you say, then?"

"Holy Saturday, if we must name a definite date."

"How will the soldiers know?"

"We can initiate a few, and tell them to look out for a signal, *pro conversione hæreticorum*. Ha, ha! you see, Bishop, I've not quite forgotten my Latin, have I?"

The door had, during the conference, been guarded by a young officer, who had heard what passed, and whose troubled face betokened the varying emotions of his soul.

"Holy Clement, fun for you, young man," said Rorengo, as he went out;

"mind you prick the heretics as Hildebrand would have had you. You must run them through the liver, although they were your own kith and kin."

"Archbishop," said the Marquis, "as your Grace grants your blessing to our holy war, will you consecrate our banners?"

Several military banners were brought out and placed before the Archbishop, with another large flag of more peculiar workmanship than the rest. In the centre was figured a cross, on which the rough knots of wood appeared to stand out. On the left an olive-branch was gracefully arranged, while a sword placed vertically occupied the right side of the oval space. The margin to these devices were the words, "*Easurge, Domine, et judica causam tuam,*" Ps. lxxiii.

"These, my lord," said the Archbishop, laying his hand on them, "these will be your emblems in your crusade of faith, and we will lay our episcopal hands upon them and bless them; we will sprinkle them

with the holy water that comes from the Baptistery of St. John Lateran, of which we have a small phial."

"Thanks, Holy Father: with the Church's benediction we cannot err."

"Fear not, the Immaculate Virgin herself will shield you; and for yourself, Marquis, take with you as a safeguard this precious relic—it is the little finger of St. Martin. It will have great effect both in keeping your faith warm, and your body from danger. The blessed Saint will guard one who carries part of his own person about with him, and it will be proof against heretical bullets. We will also send our brother Rorengo to the square to publish plenary indulgence to all who shall aid our efforts."

The Archbishop, the Delegate, the Marquis, the Chancellor, and the Priests then fell on their knees and began chanting, in a melancholy tone:—

“Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam.

“Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.”

The Primate then sprinkled the banners with water out of the phial, and incensed them with a burning censer, which he received from one of the attendants.

“We consecrate these banners,” said he, “to the service of the Holy Virgin and her Church. May they be like the banners raised against the Infidels in old time; may they lead to victory; may they float over the tract of desolated valleys in which heresy shall be extirpated, and nothing but Catholic godliness flourish!”

“Amen!” said the Marquis of Pianesse, gazing with fixed veneration at the relic which he had taken out of its jewelled casket and held in the palm of his right hand.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENVOY.

ON the day following the deliberations of the Council of the Propaganda, an officer might have been seen riding slowly on the high road from Turin to La Tour.

“I wonder,” muttered he to himself as he threw the reins listlessly on the horse’s neck, “what commission the Marquis has given me now ? I am to deliver this sealed packet into the hands of the Superior of the Convent of La Tour. I tremble when I hazard a conjecture as to what the contents may be. I fear it is something like Gastaldo’s edict which I was ordered to carry into execution, and that edict appears to

be a first fruit of the presents I brought in January from our Holy Father to the Duke of Savoy and the Council of Turin. O God, how agonizing are doubts! Why am I forced to take part in acts against which my very nature rebels? I am a persecutor. I have heard the deliberations of that Council of Blood. Would that I knew the right course to pursue, whether blindly to obey my superiors, or to follow the promptings of my own conscience. Ah," said he, with a deep sigh, "if *she* knew the part I'm playing, she would hate me. But, alas, in very truth they have suffered, and she must justly deem me one of her cruel persecutors."

An expression of agony passed over the young man's features, and betrayed the war that was waged within his soul; for the voice of nature and the relics of his moral sense struggled with education, prejudice, and creed. The ruthless determinations of the Council were abhorrent to his feelings of humanity, and to his honour as a soldier.

Considered in themselves those projects outraged every natural feeling, but they seemed trebly heinous as measures for the propagation of a faith which professed to embrace temporal and eternal happiness.

Educated in the Romish Church, Echard had received its dogmas with listless acquiescence, and it was not until he had been to Rome that his faith had received its first weakening shock. He had found that morality, conscientious faith, and religion decreased as he approached the capital of Christendom. The character of the Pope, the nepotism of the Court, the ambition, luxury, and ostentation of the Cardinals, the immorality of the monks and priests, had impressed him most unfavourably, and dissipated that enchantment and mystery with which distance and ignorance environ unfamiliar objects. The system seemed rotten at its core, and the propagation of truth at the point of the sword was a satire on the Church's authorized watchword,

“Peace on earth, good will toward men.” It was making Christ a Mahomet, and the Bible a Koran. Belief was spiritual, and subject to mental laws. To regulate it mechanically by the sword or the rack was a contradiction in terms. In the midst of these reflections his eye fell on a large crucifix which was placed near the road; and he remembered the character of that Saviour who Himself suffered for mankind, and the glory of whose kingdom consists in the liberty of love. Did Paul ever contemplate a wholesale massacre? Would he not have been cast upon the rack himself, for his pure life and doctrine, by the modern Neros? Had not the Master rebuked his two disciples who would have imitated the stern Elijah, and called down fire from heaven to revenge some trivial insult? and did He not remind them that they “knew not what manner of spirit they were of, for that the Son of Man had not come to *destroy* men’s lives but to *save* them”? Richard dis-

cerned, moreover, the influence which human nature has in religious persecutions, and that men are often gratifying their own corrupt passions when they think that they are doing God service. Impressed by these meditations Echard rode along until he came within sight of the ruins of La Baudène, which furnished a gloomy embodiment of his troubled reflections. A hallowed home of love and thanksgiving had stood where those terrible ashes lay heaped together ; the merry lay of children had once rung within those rent and blasted walls ; an original and patriarchal family, of whose singularity even Italy might boast, had dwelt here. Where were they now ? They were scattered, and charred rafters strewn over piles of crumbling brick and caked cinders were their sad memorials. Desolation was stamped upon the scene, and the very earth was, as it were, indented with ruin. Are these the triumphs of the Holy Mother Church ? Is this the requital for

difference of creed? Is this done in the service of Him who stretched out his hand and healed the ear of Malchus?

Echard saw no living thing about the place except a lonely raven, who, by his funereal note uttered Nature's reproach, and chanted her dirge over this shivered shrine. The setting sun glanced on the ruins, and served only to heighten the melancholy feeling produced by the scene. The sovereign Alps shone forth in the evening light, fresh with their eternal snows, whose chaste hue, the symbol of Heaven's purity, was a tacit protest against the blood that tinged their flakes when melted in the lowland stream. The river murmured gaily, although no laughing children went to scoop their little holes in the bank, or to sip the gushing tide. They are exiles—exiles upon those frowning crags that appear so softened in the waning light, and yet are beaten by the surging tempest.

How different was the scene some

months back when last he stood there, before Gastaldo's edict had done its hellish work. Rome might again strike a medal to commemorate her sacrilege of human nature and her triumphs over the sanctity of home!

Echard stood silent and downcast, for distrust of that Church which wields such weapons to promote her creed, became more poignant amid the ashes of the sisters' home. His personal feelings added bitterness to his reflections when he remembered her whom he had rescued from danger or death in this place, and whose bright image had haunted him ever since by day and night.

This had been her dwelling-place; but she was now an exile, and he dared not reflect on the sufferings that must have attended that sudden ejection. His lips moved as he silently breathed a prayer for her safety, and allowed his memory for the thousandth time to recount her every word and look during their brief meeting.

In vain did his reason warn him of the treacherous nature of his thoughts, considering the difference of their positions and creeds. The heart is an eloquent sophist—yea, a thoughtless suicide—and will indulge the pleasurable dreams of the present, though it may thereby enhance its future sorrows. He could not forget her, yet he hardly dare cherish the hope that she had remembered him. The scenes of grief in which they had met would be enough to stifle all other feelings, and it appeared blasphemy to think of love over the corpse of a mother or amid the desolation of a home.

Echard was startled from his reverie by the distant sound of a human voice. He listened; it seemed to him like the wail of a woman. It must be one of the scattered family weeping upon their ravaged home; it might be her whose image was engraven upon his troubled heart.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOTHER'S GRAVE.

ECHARD was not alone; another mourner whose throes were more poignant wept over the same scene. Prompted by affection, Ardoine had braved the perils of leaving Villar to revisit the places dear to her from infancy and to weep over her mother's grave. Having passed through the court-yard in which the broken fountain still poured forth a scanty stream, like an orphan's tears, pure and enduring, she ascended the tottering stairs, which bore marks of fire and blood, and once more stood within her mother's room. She cast a half-expecting glance at the accus-

tomed place, though convinced of its fruitlessness. Her mother, whom she had tended for years, and who had lain there since she was able to remember, had gone! She stood alone in that home of infancy. Overcome with these feelings she rushed to the broken framework of the bed, and fell by its side.


“My mother! thou art indeed gone! It seems like a cruel dream. What will become of thy helpless child? Is that voice silent which taught me so lovingly? O my mother! I kneel where once I knelt; but I see thee not, I hear thee not, for thou art dead!” With these words she cast herself on the bed, and wept bitterly.

After the paroxysm of grief had subsided, Ardoine hastened to the spot where her mother had been buried. She had trodden those paths from childhood, she had played beneath that aged cypress, now the sole funereal record of the past; but never had she anticipated that she should seek it as

an orphan, and kneel under its boughs over her mother's grave. The broken earth and the disjointed sod were the mute remembrancers of woe. Ardoine knelt down. Her mother was beneath. She had often knelt by her side; to kneel over her grave was a solemn change. Well might such a realization thrill the daughter's soul.

“ O mother, mother, thou hast been taken from me ! Has the end come at last ? I behold thee again lying peacefully in thy bed, I see thy gentle smile, and hear thy voice. Where am I ? Mock me not, memory, for thou art true yet false, thou art a comforter and yet a tormentor. Beloved mother ! if thy happy spirit sees thy miserable orphan, wilt thou not give me one thought of sympathy, if the bright spirits above can feel for the sorrows of earth ? Oh if ever I offended thee, if ever I neglected the least expression of thy wishes, if ever I thought of my own pleasure, or grieved thee by my youthful fol-

lies, forgive me, oh forgive me! I always strove to please thee, but thou art gone, and my little omissions become more felt. I will seek to be like thee. Thy God shall be my God, thy loving Saviour shall be my comfort and stay! I will think of thy faith, thy hope, thy love, thy patience! I will treasure up thy words, and put them into practice! Mother, the tears of the orphan are bitter! But I weep for myself. Why should I weep for thee? thou art in heaven. Thou hast what thou desiredst. Thou art with Christ. O earth, let the tears of the daughter consecrate the grave! Yet is there no hope? Yea, this cypress, green though gloomy, is an emblem of spring even amid the snows of winter. Lord," said she, looking upwards as her face shone in the dying rays of the sun which broke through the clouds and cast a passing light upon the grave—"Lord, give me thy Holy Spirit, that I may act up to the pure faith of my fathers! Let me live to thee, and amidst the sorrows



of this life may my happiness be in thee ; may heaven be my home, and Christ my friend ! O Lord ! bless him who saved me in this place, and turn his heart to thee ! God of the fatherless, pity and protect me ! for the sake of Christ our mediator. Amen."

That Amen rang upon the evening air, and it was not unheard on earth, for it caused Echard's heart to tremble under new and undefined emotions. He had beheld her face lit up with the last gush of sunshine, and heard her voice faltering with the accents of sorrow. He felt the thrill of hope, for he had the assurance that she had not forgotten him. But fears and doubts overcast his joy. He had passed before her mind only by the associations of memory and of gratitude, which must form part of that generous heart.

As Echard gazed upon her he felt that unbidden homage which the heart undesignedly yields to the beautiful and good. He had invaded the privacy of her grief. He

had heard the filial and religious feelings with which her soul overflowed, and this knowledge of her character deepened the impressions which her beauty had made, and intensified his love with admiration and esteem. Echard felt the delicacy of his position, and the difficulty of addressing her, for her grief seemed too great for the presence of a stranger. Moreover, she would naturally mistrust him, for he bore the uniform of Savoy, and was a member of that Church which had brought desolation upon their past sanctuary of home.

Irresolute what to do, he advanced into the ebbing light, and taking off his morion knelt down. "Lord of Hosts," cried he, "bind up yon broken heart, and visit not upon us the sins which have brought ruin upon this household."

Ardoine heard the voice, and started to her feet. Turning round she beheld the kneeling figure, and a glance assured her that it was her former protector Echard.

She needed no lengthened survey to recall her deliverer to her mind, for his image was graven on her heart. The instinct of the sorrowing daughter had striven to repress the unbidden affection, but a woman's gratitude bade welcome to her deliverer. She trembled, for she felt a thrill which Raynald's presence had never excited. "Sir," said she, addressing Echard, "you find me as beseems a weeping daughter. I recollect your face, and should now mingle gratitude with my grief, when I thank him who preserved my life at the risk of his own."

"Nay, speak not of it; I did but follow the promptings of my heart, and would again brave greater danger for the same holy object. I should apologize for thus surprising you, but the words of fashion seem a mockery over the grave. Let me rather avow that I thank God I have found you."

"For what purpose would you see me again?" said Ardoine, as the colour left

her cheeks ; “do you not know that I am a heretic ?”

“ I know it, but I would do a brother's part and give you warning.”

“ Warning of what ?”

“ Of something which threatens the destruction of your churches. Having saved you once, I would render you another benefit, so that I might keep my name on your lips and in your memory.”

“ Sir, I shall rejoice to know the name of my deliverer.”

“ Have you forgotten it ?” replied the officer, in a tone of disappointment. “ My name is Echard, and I am the son of the Marquis of Pianesse. My heart revolts against the deeds of my father in the service of our Church ; I am willing to convert by persuasion, but not by the sword. You have learned my name, may I not ask yours ? But the scenes in your chamber are still before me ; and if I remember rightly, your name is Ardoine.”

“Yes, Ardoine—call me Ardoine, for the circumstances under which we have met have made us friends, notwithstanding the difference of our stations, and I fear of our creeds. You said that you sought me with words of warning.”

“It is so. In speaking to you thus I am risking my prospects, and indeed my life; were I betrayed I should be ruined.”

“God can protect you; He will not forget your generous succour to a helpless orphan.”

“Ardoine, my position has placed me behind the scenes. The Marquis has been deluding your deputies at Turin. They have only been referred from one Council to another, so as to blind them and to gain time. Your grievances have never been laid before the Duke.”

“Oh! and my dear uncle Janavel, I fear he is there, and perhaps my cousin Raynald.”

“Ah, Raynald! Is he your cousin, the



"I fear this official seal," continued he, showing her his despatches,
"conveys instructions of blood and death."

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and the goals that need to be achieved.

of the Marginalist movement, and the "solidarity of the whole of groups, and that the whole is more than the sum."

young man whom I met in your mother's room ; I thought he was your brother ?" and Echard's voice faltered as he gave utterance to his doubt.

"No ; Raynald is my cousin : we have been playmates from childhood, and I love him as I should my own brother."

"Only as a brother ! then my heart may still cherish hope. Oh, Ardoine," continued Echard, drawing nearer, "let me tell you, standing as we do on your mother's grave, that if you need a friend hereafter, Echard is yours. Let not my creed nor position make you doubt me. My sympathy with your grief veils my feelings, and forbids me doing justice to my heart ; but, Ardoine, you are an orphan."

"Enough ; I will trust you. Your manner and your deeds prove your sincerity. I accept your offer with gratitude, but I await your information."

"The Marquis is assembling a large body of troops, and I fear this official seal,"

continued he, showing her his despatches, "conveys instructions of blood and death."

"But we are not rebels against the Duke."

"No, but you are heretics, and he purposes to carry out the Marchioness's dying request for the extirpation of heresy. His means, I fear, are fire and the sword."

"God forbid!" said Ardoine; "can man conceive such wickedness? Do you, sir," she continued, addressing Echard steadily, "do you consider this worthy of Him whose name we both profess to worship? Would Christ have sanctioned this when He bade Peter put up his sword into its sheath? Can you believe that such acts can be pleasing to a God of mercy who sent his Son to bear our sorrows and to teach us to love one another?"

"My conscience is sorely perplexed at times," replied the officer gravely; "my heart revolts against cruelties in the name of the Universal Father and Redeemer. I

have felt that doctrines which must be enforced by blood, and resist investigation, are suspicious."

"Thank Heaven! that you avow so much. Oh, let me implore you to separate yourself from that Church whose creed is false, and whose fruits are bitter. We take the Scriptures as our rule of faith. Examine them; see if our teaching does not commend itself to your heart and head. Our grand yet simple doctrine is salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus, proved by sanctification of life, through the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Is not this brighter for man and more worthy of God? The Scripture says, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' Is not this more consoling than your purgatory?"

"Fair instructress!" said Echard, reflecting on the two death-beds he had lately witnessed, "if I listen much longer, you will make me abjure the Church which hath reared me; I shall recant both from

regard to you and to your statements. I do not know what is in this packet, but my suspicions are what I have stated. I must now hasten on to La Tour, and discharge my commission; and I will endeavour to learn what is to happen, and to meet you here again in a few days. I will thrust my sword into the ground, thus, and when you see the signal you may venture to come forth. Circumstances may enable me to befriend you; trust in me, and pray to God for me. Though absent, let me at least hope I shall not be forgotten. If you will remember me as one who has served you, and who will do so again, you will confer upon me the greatest reward I can ask."

The maiden blushed, and turned away her eyes, though she did not withdraw the hand, which the young man seized, and pressed to his lips. Nor could she refrain from a sigh, as she stole one last glance at the retreating figure.

CHAPTER V.

BEQUESTS OF THE INQUISITION.

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance."—HEB. xi. 35.

AFTER Echard had delivered his missive on the following day to the authorities at La Tour, he was informed that he was to remain on duty at the convent, and to assist the Holy Fathers in carrying out the intentions of the "*Consilium de propagandâ Fide, et extirpandis Hæreticis.*"

Having been conducted to the chamber of the Inquisition, he saw two men standing bound before the tribunal, at which sat Gastaldo, Rorengo, Placido, and De la Mèna, whom circumstances had brought from Turin more speedily than they had anticipated.

"We are ready," said Jean Prins, who was one of the prisoners, "not only to abjure, but also to be subjected to any penalties, if it can be shown to us from Holy Scripture that our doctrines are erroneous."

"Abjure your errors, whatsoever they may be," said Rorengo, "and I will hold you as dear as I now hold you guilty; if not, then tremble for the penalty of your obstinacy."

"Would your Grace," answered Jean, "be pleased to tell us what points we are required to abjure?"

"It is needless," said Gastaldo; "a general abjuration will satisfy us."

"But it is upon our confession of faith that we ought to be examined."

"And what is that?" asked De la Mèna, who was a doctor of divinity.

Rorengo presented it to him, saying, "See, the whole thing is full of heresy."

After Echard had entered, another prisoner was brought in by some soldiers.

"Holy Fathers!" exclaimed Cattalin, who was at their head, "we have caught another *barbet* who refused to cross himself, belonging to that cursed nest of La Baudène."

"Ah! brother," said David, addressing Jean, "do we thus meet? God grant us grace to imitate our Master's example, and to witness a good confession."

"Abjure your errors, and you shall be set free," said Gastaldo, addressing the two brothers.

"After all," sneered Rorengo, "you are nothing but the bastards of Luther."

"I am not a Lutheran," said Jean, "for Luther did not die for me, but Jesus Christ only, whose name I bear."

"But, Signor Rorengo," interrupted David, with a smile, "I might refute you by appealing to your own work, printed at Turin in 1632, in which you say that our doctrines have continued in our valleys during the ninth and tenth centuries, and

that our heresies are so old that it is impossible to say at what period they began. You have been ten years amongst us, and ought to know."

"I know very well," replied De la Mèna, "that there is not so much ill amongst you as people think; nevertheless, to satisfy men's minds, it is necessary that you should submit to some appearance of abjuration."

"What would you have us to abjure," inquired they, "if we are in the truth?"

"I have spoken the truth," said Jean; "how can I change my words, and make a retraction? Can a man change the truth as he would change his garments?"

"It is nothing but a mere formality that I require of you," added the Inquisitor.

They made no reply.

"I demand neither notary nor signature. Only make an abjuration here in secret, and as vague as you please, and I will put an end to all these prosecutions."

“We are frank and sincere, my lord,” answered they, “and we dare not promise anything that we cannot keep.”

“Do you dispute the authority of the Pope to forgive sin?” asked De la Mèna.

“I do. If the Pope had had the power of pardoning sins, it would have been needless for Jesus Christ to have come down and died for sinners.”

“We have nothing to do with disputations, but to know if you will abjure—aye or no.”

“No.”

“Ah! well, then, it goes the devil’s way,” replied the auditor, and signed himself four times with the sign of the cross.

“At least confess, if you will not abjure.”

“I only confess to God.”

“Come to mass, or you shall be a dead man.”

“Jesus says, ‘If ye believe in me, though ye were dead, yet shall ye live.’”

“Well, kiss this crucifix.”

“My Jesus is not upon that piece of wood, but in heaven, from whence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

“You will not kiss it?”

“I do not choose to be an idolater.”

“You have a wife and children,” said Gastaldo, addressing Jean. “Do you really wish to leave your orphans?”

“Christ is the heavenly husband of faithful souls. An immortal Redeemer is better than a husband who must die.”

“But can you not postpone your death by coming to mass?”

“Say rather that I should hasten it, for that would be the death of my soul.”

“Are you not afraid of the punishment which is in preparation for you?”

“Christ says, ‘Fear not them who can only kill the body, but rather fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell.’”

“You will do the Church less service when you are dead.”

“The death of the faithful is a seed of life which remains behind them longer than their works would have done.”

“You do not, then,” said Rorengo, “believe in Christ’s corporal presence in the host?”

“God forbid! Do you not know the Creed?”

“Yes; but what of that?”

“Is it not there said that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father? Then He is not in the host! But I promise to go to mass provided it be stripped of all human additions, and restored as it was instituted by Christ.”

“What is your hope of salvation?” asked Placido, with some interest.

“There is no salvation but in Jesus Christ; and we ought to do good works, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved.”

“What’s the use of all this?” interrupted Rorengo; “do you not know that you will be put to death as heretics if you do not relinquish your errors?”

“Glory be to God! for that He has thought me worthy to die for his name. O Lord, give me grace to persevere unto the end! Pardon those whose sentence is now to separate my soul from my body, for they are blind. O Lord, enlighten them by Thy Spirit, and bring them soon to the knowledge of the truth.”

“Is it possible,” said Placido Corso, “that men can speak in this way of a condemnation to death?”

“It is by death,” answered David, triumphantly, “that our souls attain to the fulness of their life.”

“We adjure you, ye judges, as you value your immortal souls, to examine whether these things be so.”

“Young man,” continued David, pointedly addressing Echard, “listen to our

confession of faith, and may God turn your heart to the truth, and you will then understand our principles and conduct."

These words fell on Echard's ear, as he paced near the door, and he could hardly resist looking with affection on those who gave utterance to such noble and simple truths, and were prepared to seal their faith with their blood. Some of their speeches went like arrows to his heart, and confirmed what he had lately heard from Ardoine on the grave. But prejudice and education were not to be overcome suddenly, and Echard went through those alternations of doubt and remorse which to a conscientious mind form a mental misery that has often brought many to the verge of the grave.

CHAPTER VI.

MORAL HEROISM.

“Out of weakness were made strong.”—HEB. xi. 34.

WHEN Marguerite, after the convulsions of the night of the 28th of January, realized that her husband Jean had been taken prisoner, her grief was uncontrolled; and though she used every exertion it was some weeks before she ascertained that he was confined in the Convent of La Tour. Since that time the two sisters had remained at Villar with some of the children, in comparative quiet, until the beginning of April, when an incursion had been made by the soldiers of La Tour, who had carried off David and Daniel. The family had already arranged that if extreme danger obliged

them to separate some should take refuge in Rora, and others either in Angrogna or in the caverns of Castelluzzo, according to circumstances.

“Ah, Madeleine,” said Marguerite, as they sat in their room at Villar, “my heart is torn within me; I cannot endure the thought of my beloved Jean being a captive in the Convent of La Tour.”

“Dear sister, why should you imagine the worst? It is more like me than you to do so.”

“My heart breaks, Madeleine. I know his gentle disposition. What if they should torture him! I would rather endure it myself! Oh if he should fall away from our faith through fear of death. Lord, hear the prayers of the broken-hearted, thou God of the widow!”

“Oh, my sister, you touch my heart. I shall not be able to comfort you, but shall need your comfort.”

“Madeleine, I have a plan,” said Marguerite, after a pause. “Perhaps it is

God who has put it into my mind. Our home is broken up. I will try and see him again ; I will join him, I will implore his release, or comfort his spirit to the last. With his natural gentleness he always leaned on me ; he would move out of his path rather than tread on a worm ; and now—— oh I dare not think of it.”

“ But beloved, how can you contemplate such a thing ? It may be the ruin of yourself. Think how you risk your life.”

“ What ! you a woman and a wife, and not understand the motive ? It is through that which has enabled women to triumph in every age, it is through love. Do not I mourn over a meek spirit like his with almost the tenderness of a mother, as well as the devotion of a wife ?”

“ I always loved and admired you, but now I tremble for you ; you will be martyred ; perhaps I shall see you no more.”

“ Madeleine, think of him whom I vowed to love. Shall I not brighten my last days

by causing a smile to rest on his dying features, or by effecting his release? Oh no, it is the glory of love to forget self, and to dare to do what is right! My heart would reproach me did I leave my beloved alone; he shall at least know that his wife loves him to the end, and can brave death by his side."

"Then, Marguerite, grant me one request. I love you as my life; our hearts are twins as well as our bodies. I will not leave you. I will come with you. God can preserve us. Surely they do not thirst for our blood."

"My Madeleine, your offer is indeed a noble triumph. But as my venture will be attended with danger, you had better leave me to go alone, and not risk your own life."

"No, no; I am determined. I shall cleave to you. I am in one sense alone; my husband is dead; my children are scattered or martyred; I shall see them no more. It is better for me to die. At least I will share your fate. I feel a mo-

mentary strength above my general weakness. We were born together, and if needs be we will die together."

"Sister, it is the voice of the Lord. If we rescue them, it will be a joy to us to hallow all our lives; and if we perish, we shall sooner enter the realms of glory."

A few days afterwards, Marguerite, accompanied by Madeleine and André, presented herself at the Convent of La Tour, and asked for an audience of the Commissioners. "I have come, sirs," said she, after having been ushered into their presence, "to ask permission to see my husband, who lies in the dungeon of this convent. Grant a poor afflicted wife this charity for the love of God."

"We will willingly grant you your request, provided that you will not harden him in his errors," replied Gastaldo.

"I promise you," replied Marguerite, "that I will not speak to him except for his good."

“Fortune favours us,” said Rorengo, aside to De la Mèna, “she will play our game; she will urge him to recant to save his life, and do more than our quotations from the Canon Law can do.”

She entered the dungeon, accompanied by Gastaldo and Rorengo, and there lay Jean. He looked up as the door creaked on its hinges, and could hardly believe his eyes, as he beheld his wife standing in his cell. He would fain have seen her face once more before his death, and yearned for one more embrace, even on the brink of the grave. God had granted his request, and in so doing bade him be of good courage. They rushed to each other's arms in the transports of nature, undeterred by the presence of those hypocrites, whose breasts, through the tyranny of their Church, had never throbbed with the fervour of guiltless love.

“Beloved, beloved, I have come to see you, to speak with you, your own loving wife. Ah, my Jean, death may be near

you. Pardon me if I have wronged you; but I trembled, I trembled. I would risk death to comfort you. Jean, think not of me; think only of Christ our Saviour. Be true to him. Cast not away your good hope for the love of life, or of me. Think not of the death of the body; it is, after all, short. Eternity, eternity! Think of the soul. Shall it live for ever in heaven or hell? Then think of the soul! Jesus calls thee. His blood has cleansed thee. Trust to that alone, my beloved; thou hast the witness of the Holy Ghost that thou believest."

"How now, Hag of Erebus," cried Rorengo, "didst not thou say thou wouldst speak with him for his good? I feel as if I could draw my knife across thy tongue, which has been set on fire of hell. Harlot of Gomorrha, dost thou wish to cast thy wretched husband into the gulf of perdition, where thou and he shall roast for ever?"

"Jean, Jean," continued the woman,

earnest and unmoved, fixing her eyes on her husband with the gaze of affection, "let not the assaults of the wicked one make you abandon the profession of your hope in Jesus Christ."

"Exhort him to obey us, or you shall both be hanged," cried Gastaldo.

"And let not the love of this world's indulgences make you lose the inheritance of heaven," continued the Christian woman, without pausing in her calm exhortations.

"Heretical she-devil," exclaimed Rorengo, "if you do not change your tone you shall be burned to-morrow."

"Would I have come to persuade him to die rather than to abjure," she replied, "if I could myself seek to escape death by apostacy?"

"You should fear at any rate the torments of the pile."

"I fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into a more terrible fire than that of your billets."

"Hell is for heretics. Save yourselves by renouncing your errors."

"Where can the truth be if not in the Word of God?"

"This will be the destruction of you both," cried out Rome's messenger of peace and preacher of the gospel.

"Blessed be God!" said Marguerite, looking at Jean, "because having united us in life, He will not separate us in death."

"Instead of one we shall have two of them to burn," sneeringly muttered the executioners.

"I will be thy companion to the end," the heroic woman simply added.

"Will you come to mass, and have your pardon?"

"I would rather go to the pile, and have eternal life."

"If you do not abjure, your husband shall be burned to-morrow and you three days after."

"We shall meet again in heaven," replied she, mildly casting her eye to the damp rough roof of the vault.

"Think of the delay that is still granted you."

"The length of it is of no consequence, for my resolution is for life."

"Say rather it is for death."

"The death of the body, but life of the soul."

"Have you nothing else to reply to us, you obstinate wretch?"

"Nothing, except that I beseech you not to put off my execution for three days, but to let me die with my husband."

Jean gazed at his wife in speechless transports. At first he thought she was a captive, and when he realized her noble act and its motive, his bosom swelled with redoubled love, heightened by gratitude and admiration.

"Well," said the priest, addressing little André, who accompanied Marguerite,

“you can tell me, my little one, which is the true Church?”

“Yes, it is the Church of which Jesus Christ is the head,” replied the boy, who had grasped his mother’s dress, and crept behind her.

“It is the Roman Catholic Church, my boy. Now do you pray to the Virgin every night?”

“No, mother never taught me. I pray to Christ.”

“And do you not confess your sins to a good priest who has power to forgive them?”

“No, mother never taught me. I confess to God.”

“But will you not belong to us? You would not like to be whipped until you were dead, because you would not belong to the true Church.”

“No, mother never taught me. I will belong to the Church to which she belongs.”

“Do you not cross yourself?”

“No, mother never taught me.”

“If you do not say ‘*Ave Maria*,’ and cross yourself, and become a Roman Catholic, we shall burn your mother and break her bones in pieces.”

“Shall I do it, mother? Will they hurt you? You have not taught me so. What would God have me do? I will do what you do, for what you do is right; they may hurt me if they won’t touch you.”

There stood Marguerite, a Christian heroine. She entered the prison a free woman, she was now in the jaws of death. Glancing tenderly at Jean, she secretly dropped some lilies of the valley on the damp floor of the dungeon, hoping that they might comfort the beloved prisoner. Soon after she and Madeleine had been removed, the forlorn Jean found the precious relics, and clasping them to his heart, and kissing the ground on which his wife

had stood, thanked God that He had made woman to be an helpmeet for man.

Wondrous religion ! How varied are its triumphs ! It could support Marie in equable patience and joy on the lingering bed of suffering for more than twenty years ; it could out of weakness bring forth strength, causing this sister to stand in the condemned cell, her voice eloquent with truth, her eye calmly fixed on death, her soul soaring to unseen realms ; and it could perfect praise, and tune Hosannas in the mouths of babes and sucklings.

“This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

NOTE.—For the historical confirmation of the two preceding and four or five following chapters, the reader is particularly requested to consult the Appendix at the end of this volume.

CHAPTER VII.

THE APOSTATES.

"Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment."—
HEB. xi. 36.

"I HOPE," said De la Mèna, addressing the Archbishop, shortly afterwards, "that you have had better luck than we have had."

"Yes, we have reclaimed two *barbets*."

"Ha! To win over a brace of teachers is a good day's work," replied the other.

"Especially if you knew how hard it was. I could not win them over by argument, for they are well versed in that, and they have the writings of Peter and Paul at their fingers' ends; they know more of them than I did when I got my academic degree."

"How did you overcome them?" asked the Marquis of Pianesse, who had come down from Turin for a few hours.

"Ah! Marquis, you know, or as you are a layman perhaps you don't know, but there's one who has had great experience of our race, and he said, 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.'"

"Be a little more explicit, my Lord, for I am more of a soldier than a theologian. My *Pater* and *Credo* are embossed on my sword."

"I mean that we had to appeal to their fear of torture. They did not fancy having a twist on the Gehenna, so they have come over to the bosom of the Church."

"*Viva la Santa Chìesa!* You have done spiritual work with spiritual weapons."

"As for that, we're glad to convert them. It lessens the scandals of apostates. Two such conversions will be splendid capital in these valleys. It will be a stimulant to the soldiers of the cross, and

a regular death-wound to the heretics. When the standard-bearers have fallen, the infantry, you know, my Lord—to take a metaphor from your profession—will soon fall into disorder. But I expect them up here shortly to receive their certificates, and then I propose making them work in the Church's service."

"Well conceived. Keep them in motion : it will keep the head from forgetting your arguments, and the heart from recanting."

"I thought it would be a fine stroke of policy, if we took them down to some of their old parishioners, or if we could make them preach in their late pulpits. It would be a glorious scandal, and blacken them forever in the eyes of their people : a case of Absalom, an irreparable breach."

"Inform me when it is," rejoined the Marquis, jocularly, "for I should like to hear the maiden sermon ; let me know, for my doctrines are rusting. I want a polemic hour or two with a *barbet* just to

freshen my brains, and to keep my hand in with the sword."

At this moment the two pastors, Gros and Aquit, entered the room, accompanied by Gastaldo and Malvicino.

"Friends," said the Archbishop, addressing the apostates, "our hearts rejoice over the prodigals. We welcome you into the bosom of the Holy Church. Are you both still of the same mind?"

"We are, my Lord; you have brought us over into the Church of Rome, and we must abide in her communion."

"Stay, Apostolic Delegate, you gave me some certificates; I wish we had used more of them. Here they are, I see there's a blank place left for the name, I'll fill one up for you. Signor Gros, you are the eldest. Here is one for you—I think that is right. I'll read it out:—"

"Je soussigné atteste que M. Gros a renoncé à l'herésie de Calvin, et s'est sou-

mis à l'obéissance, et foy de l'Eglise Romaine, promittant d'y vivre et mourir.

“Fra Prospero, da Tarano,

“Prefetto Apostolico.”

“Show that to any soldiers you meet, and you'll be safe. There's another for you, sir. And now, my long-lost sons, you should do what you can to bring your erring brethren into the true fold. Come with me, and you shall persuade two obstinate heretics to follow your example.”

The unhappy men followed the Archbishop until they came to a dungeon in which were two prisoners. Aquit was shocked to recognize David and Jean Prins, men with whom he had held spiritual intercourse, and who had been elders of his church.

Unhappy Pastors! They felt the torments of an upbraiding conscience. Would that they had imitated those whom they had once taught! Those prisoners had heard the truth from their lips, and themselves

steadfast, now witnessed their pastors' defection. Shame, remorse, and anguish crushed them to the very dust.

"Come, look up, children," said the Archbishop, "lift up your heads, heretics, here are some friends come to see you in prison, and to give you good advice—you have only to follow their good example, and then all will be well."

"Pastor Aquit," said David, "is that you? The Lord has brought us into the deep waters of affliction, but blessed be his holy name we hold fast the Gospel you taught us, and we trust He will give us the crown of life."

"Come, speak out," said the Delegate, tapping Gros on the shoulder, "tell him the truth, and exhort him to be wise."

"Brother, we have come hither to entreat you to save yourself. We have felt it our duty to listen more attentively to the arguments adduced for the Holy Roman Church, and we see that there was

much misapprehension on our part. We have therefore joined the Holy Mother Church, and we exhort you to do the same, to save your lives, the wrecks of your families and estates. Oh think of the cruel pangs which you will endure if you do not recant!"

David looked up in horror, as if his ear had deceived him. Was this the pastor from whom he had heard the Word of God, who had expounded the Gospel of Christ's grace? Was he exhorting him to apostacy? to save his life at the expense of his soul? What had overcome him? Was it the love of life, and the fear of the torture? Had they been leaning on their own strength, and so fallen?

David was silent for some time.

"Brother, brother," exclaimed he at length, "do my ears deceive me? Alas! I never thought to have lived to see this day! Alas! for our Church! Our candlestick is now being removed. Oh, have you then left the Church of your fathers? Have

you so long warned us against the errors of Rome, and now fallen yourselves? And what can have persuaded you? It must be the fear of torture and of death; for you would not be overcome by argument. Oh, late beloved pastor, do not save your life in this world, to lose your soul in the next. O God, what a scandal to our Church! what an arrow to my heart! Wretched priest, this cuts me more poignantly than all your tortures."

"Come, what is all this canting?" exclaimed the Duke's confessor, "your late pastor has come to resume his functions, he has come to teach you; he has found out his errors, and like an honest man he has come to tell you so; and if he can convince you he will re-baptize you both without delay or fees."

"Cease your wicked jesting, craven priest; neither human misery nor things Divine appeal to your seared conscience. You will have enough to answer for before

God at the day of judgment. Thank God I am what I am! Thank God, his grace has so far kept me from falling. Oh! I would not change places with you now for all the gold in Rome's coffers; I am happier in my chains; God is with me; my conscience is at peace through my Saviour's blood. Oh, pastor, beloved pastor! we shall never meet again on earth; hear the dying voice of him who was once a member of your flock. Oh turn back! you have caused many to stumble, but still turn back. Remember the discourse you once preached on Isaiah i. 18:—"Though your sins be double-dyed like crimson, yet they may be as the stainless snow." "

"Come, come, if you attempt to proselytize my new convert I'll knock you down with my fist, you brand of perdition. You see he's recanted, and there's his certificate. Here, where is it? Let me read it out. There, it's all in due form; and he has acted wisely, or else by this time he

would have been carrion for the wolves or the eagles."

"Ah! Lord," said David, "the torments of the body are hard to bear, but still thou dost support us under them. But it is written, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' my heart is wounded within me, for this insult will cause thine enemies to blaspheme. Jean," said David to his brother, after the others had left the dungeon, "Jean, my heart is broken. Let us throw ourselves upon our Saviour, whose love fails not."

Jean returned no answer. He had been silent during most of the interview, and he did not speak now. David went to him, and behold he was dead. The shock was too great for his tender spirit. Like Eli, who was bowed when he heard that the ark of God was taken, so the spirit of Jean sank when he saw his former pastors enter his dungeon not as fellow martyrs, but as apostates to exhort him to forswear his

father's faith. Some time after Rorengo and De la Mèna had left, a number of missionary monks came to assault the lonely prisoner.

"Come, now listen to us," shouted one of the monks, shaking a crucifix in David's face, and putting it against his lips. "You shall be exempted from all taxes and imposts if you will renounce your heresy, and shall have all the other advantages given to converts."

"I care nothing for worldly taxes, my soul has done with earth, and is soon to appear before God."

"Then you will have the good graces of the Marquis of Pianesse and of his Royal Highness the Duke, and this will be no slight gain."

"I wish to gain the approbation of the King of kings and Prince of Peace."

"Well, think of your children, they shall be advanced, in the state, or army, and every parent desires his family to get on well."

“ My children I commit to God, He can provide for them.”

“ Then you will receive a good sum of money, and have your life saved.”

“ ‘ He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.’ ”

“ Well, think of your poor wife and six children. Will you leave them beggars and outcasts, and subject to the same cruel death ?”

“ Look,” interposed another, “ your wife has recanted. This is her certificate. Her name is Lucille. You had better do the same, before it is too late.”

“ O Lord, if that were true it would be my death-wound. But I can trust my beloved. She will look to God for help, and she will meet me in the realms above.”

“ Do you see your wife’s certificate, you old drone ? What have you got to say to that ? Is not seeing believing ?”

“ For my wife and children I only pray that they may have grace to die with me,

and follow my steps. As for your promises, get thee behind me, Satan ; and as for your menaces I do not fear them, for you can only kill the body. But I fear Him who can send both soul and body to hell, who will receive me into his kingdom, and exact from you an account of the innocent blood which you have shed."

David was martyred soon after this. We need not harrow the reader's feelings by the details. Suffice to say they were worthy of the genius of Moloch, and might have been suggested by a personal hint from the devil himself. The passage is subjoined as it stands in the original history.

"What's this carrion?" said the Marquis, coming in later, and tumbling over the body of Jean.

"Only a heretic, my lord. Our soldiers have got another brother yet."

"Then send him to the galleys for life, as a change," said Pianesse. "Let his Royal Highness get the benefit of his arms.

Where's that scoundrel, Mullenier, who gave this fellow a glass of water? If I catch him playing that game, I'll flay him alive like them. Is the other fellow dead yet?"

"He's going, he'll soon be like his brother."

"My lord," said De la Mèna, "I think we will fill up a certificate for our dead brother, eh? We can take it to his wife and tell her her husband has given in. This will have its effect on a woman's heart."

"By all means try it, confessor, though these *barbets*' obstinacy will not yield, I fear, to paper documents. I forgot to ask you if you had paid the hundred scudi, promised by law to informants, to Berru, who witnessed against these fellows that they had passed a cross without bowing, and had brought an ass into the church at Villar."

"Yes, my lord, he's been paid."

"Good," said the Marquis, ascending to his chamber, pouring out a glass of Campiglione.

"*Viva la Santa Fede*," said he, moving his glass in the air. "*Viva la santa Chiesa Romana et guai agli Barbetti*."

Rome! Rome! thou hadst not only those who did these deeds, but in the present day thou hast thine apologists! alas! even in Protestant England. May thine arms be ever chained, that we may never court mercy from the vulture's heart. What thou hast been, that thou art! Mutable in thy additions to thy romances and dogmas, thou art still the embodiment of human nature, and changeless in thy murderous zeal. Thou hast repeated these hecatombs of blood on too many soils and in too many climes to make us look upon them as accidental outbursts. They are part of thy genius, part of thy sectarian intolerance, deeds which will earn for thee the execration of the world!

“Le Sieur Jaques Prin, Ancien de l'Eglise du Villar, et David son Frère, ayans esté saisis dans leurs lits au village nommé la Baudène, furent transportés à Lucerne, où ils furent jettés dans les plus basses prisons du Marquis d'Angrogne, et là furent martyrizés d'une manière qu'on ne peut écrire sans frémir : sans parler de plusieurs autres tourmens dont on voit assez de preuves en plusieurs autres personnes, on leur écorcha les bras depuis les épaules jusques au coude, justement en forme d'aiguillettes de peau que l'on laissoit attachées au corps par le haut, et restoient ainsi flottantes sur la chair vive ; on leur écorcha de même façon le reste des bras depuis le coude jusques aux mains, et les cuisses jusques aux genoux, et enfin les jambes depuis la jarretire jusques à la cheville du pied : et puis on les laissa mourir de soif en cet état.

“Jean Gonnet, venerable vieillard de

Boby, recût le même traitement que ces Prins.

“ Outre les Attestations des autres prisonniers réchappés, et de plusieurs Papistes mêmes, j’ay celles d’Anthoine Mullenier autrement dit Raymond, Sergeant de Justice Papiste, qui devoit avoir soin de ces captifs, qui m’a juré luy même, que comme il avoit autres-fois receu beaucoup de faveur de ces bonnes gens, et qu’à la dérobée il leur vouloit porter un seau d’eau, ayant esté surpris en cette action par le Marquis de Lucerne, il luy donna des coups de baguette, et le menaça de le fourrer avec eux, s’il leur donnoit quelque chose contre ses ordres.” (*Vide* Matt. x. 42.)

“ Comme je connoissois particulièrement la famille de ces Prins, je ne puis m’empêcher de remarquer icy par parentese, qu’ils estoient six Frères, et avoient épousé six Sœurs, ayans tous plusieurs enfans, et vivoient tous ensemble sans avoir jamais fait de partage, et sans que jamais on ait

remarqué la moindre discorde, dans cette Famille; composée de plus de 40 personnes, chacun se tenant à sa tâche, les uns au travail des Vignes, et au Labourage des Champs, les autres au soin des Prairies, et à celui des troupeaux de Vaches, de Brebis, ou de Chevres. L'ainé des Freres, et sa Femme qui estoit l'ainée des Sœurs, estans le Père et la Mère de toute la Famille."—*Léger*, Book ii., chap. ix., page 122.

The following is the passage as it stands in Sir Samuel Morland's History, preceding a quaint illustration of the cruel process :—

"Jacopo Perrin, an Elder of the Church of Villaro, and David his Brother, were taken prisoners in their beds, in a certain Village called La Baudine, and carried from thence to Lucerna, where they were clapt up in the Marquess his prison, where they were most barbarously and inhumanely used; amongst other things, the bloody Butchers of that place stript off the skin off their Arms and Legs by long slices, in the form of leathern points, till such time as they had left the flesh quite bare, and at length they were miserably starved to death in the same prison, where their Carcasses were likewise suffered to lye and putrifie."—*Morland*, Book ii., chap. vi., page 346.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWINS.

“That they might obtain a better resurrection.”—
HEB. xi: 35.

IN a dungeon of the convent of La Tour, on the evening of the 16th of April, 1655, were two female prisoners. They had nothing in the cell save the barest necessities—to wit, a heap of straw, a broken stool, and a pitcher of water. They lay side by side on the straw, like sisters embracing for the last time.

“Marguerite,” exclaimed the younger, rising and walking about the cell, “my spirit fails me. Did you ever see such an awful place? How different from our beloved home!”

“My sister, compose yourself,” rejoined

the elder. "We shall soon have a better one in heaven, so let us not weep over the home on earth, now hopelessly lost."

"I have not your faith. I can't see before me the bright sunshine of that city on which you love to dwell; my thoughts cling to earth."

"But, beloved sister, God sends troubles to wean us from this world and make us ready for heaven. Look at this prison. This is not our home. We are only on a short journey, perhaps to-morrow night we shall neither of us be here."

"Oh don't talk of it. My heart cannot bear the thought. Look, I see all our dear circle. There is our dear father in his fireside corner. At this hour I see him blessing my little boys. Oh how would my beloved husband's heart have groaned could he have seen this misery before us!"

"Well, dear Madeleine, we can thank God when we look at the past. We have dwelt together in unity. Our property has

been common to us all; our family has not been separated by feuds, nor jealousies; so let us bless God that we have given proof of what his Holy Word can effect."

"Ah! There's dear Etienne," continued Madeleine, absorbed in her reflections; "the little fellow is telling us about his goats, and now he's putting up his bright face to be kissed. There he is, running off with your Susanne in his arms. Marguerite, is this a dream? Where are we now? Oh, I see this black prison! Is not your heart broken?"

"It would be, sister, were it not for One who has promised to heal the broken in heart and bind up their wounds. Forgive me, my beloved, but you are hardly right in dwelling thus painfully on the past. It makes your present sorrow harder to bear."

"You can take these trials better than I can. You always were superior to me in strength of mind. But let me thank God that you, my dearest, best friend, are not sepa-

rated from me in this dark hour." And she folded her sister to her bosom in a strained embrace.

"Madeleine," continued Marguerite, "pray for faith, and look above. These providences should wean us from earth. I never felt heaven to be such a reality as I do now. I feel like one who has got a real treasure laid up where my Saviour is. I only pray that God may keep my beloved Jean steadfast to the end. I shall soon join him in heaven."

"I wish I could feel as much, but sorrow chokes my heart, and my weak faith struggles with doubts."

"Think of the kingdom—THE KINGDOM; is not that a glorious idea? Do you not remember how sweetly father spake on those words, 'Here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come.'"

"Yes, I remember it, for my little Lena asked me how many times larger than our valley the city would be."

“Think of that city, and of Him who dwells there. We shall be ever with the Lord—ever with the Lord : let that cheer us. We are in the fire now, but the reward is hereafter.”

“It is so sweet to hear you talk, my more than sister, and I do not feel so frightened in this gloomy dungeon when I hear your voice. Oh, my boys, my boys, what would your mother give to clasp you once more? Shall we ever get out, do you think?”

“I cannot tell. Let us strengthen ourselves in God, and prepare for the worst.”

“What do you mean? Surely you do not think they will put us to a cruel death?”

“They may,” calmly rejoined Marguerite. “You have heard father speak of the martyrdom of Coupin : there are many such in our history.”

“The very thought makes me tremble.

Oh, I cannot endure it—I cannot—I cannot.”

“With God all things are possible. Remember David’s words, ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me,’ ” she repeated with slow emphasis.

“And do you really feel that you dare submit to the torture ?”

“The Lord’s strength is made perfect in weakness. Surely you would not cast off your faith, dearest Madeleine, through fear of some short bodily pain.”

“I hope I should not do that, but my flesh and my heart faint.”

“But add also, ‘God is the strength of my heart.’ It is He who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. How wretched you would be if you were this moment to be set at liberty, by recanting and promising to go to mass. Independently of the scorn of all our people, your own conscience would sting

you so, that you would be glad to come back to this prison."

"Yes, the thought is dreadful. Much as I shudder at the rack, I shrink more from the brand of apostate."

"Have faith in God, sister, and all will be well. Remember that splendid chapter in Hebrews which our little ones said to us, as a sweet surprise on the morning of the New Year. As you love to look back, can you not hear their sweet little voices repeating some of the verses of that eleventh chapter?"

"Indeed I can. What a delightful sound it was to a mother's heart! Oh! my boys, my children, I can't now hear your sweet voices, nor can you see your mother's tears."

"Come, Madeleine, you will help to bow my spirit too. I am sorely moved when I think of dearest Jean, and of the cloud which hangs over us all; but I wish to glorify God by an unrepining acquiescence in his

providence, and to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal."

"Ah! Marguerite, you seem to have caught some of the spirit that dwelt in our beloved Marie: when I told her my faint-hearted doubts, she would lovingly bid me look upwards."

"Poor Marie, let us thank God that He has taken her to Himself, just as this storm was coming. It would have been dreadful to think of her suffering. There are mercies in our trials, you see; something to be thankful for, though we weep."

"I would ten times sooner be here myself than think of our dear Marie being insulted or tortured; her soul is in heaven now."

"And we may join her before long. Are you ready to say farewell to this world, Madeleine? This night may be our last."

“Oh, my dearest sister, if ever you have seen anything in me that was wrong, if ever I have hurt your feelings, or said an unkind word to any of our dear ones, I ask your forgiveness.”

“My sweet Madeleine, speak not thus; your gentle spirit need not reproach itself, and to me you have ever been ‘a sister,’ in the deepest, truest sense.”

“Well, we can embrace each other with death in sight; your kind sympathy and wise advice have ever been a support to a weak heart like mine.”

“And your clinging love has ever been sweet to me, and a gentle reproof to my spirit, which is naturally too self-confident.”

“Oh, sister,” exclaimed Marguerite, weeping, “my heart bleeds when I think that I am the cause of your being here. Your love led you to accompany me, and it may cost you your life. Oh, forgive me; I wish, for your sake, I could live the rest

of my life on bread and water, or die for your release."

"You wrong me to speak thus, sister. No. Must I then turn comforter, and bid you repose on the wisdom that numbers our hairs? You did a noble duty; from love to you I shared the danger, and love shall support me to the end. But speak to me still as you have ever done. Let our last night together, if such it should be, be blessed. Repeat me those verses of our favourite chapter, which you quoted in the vineyards of Lucerna in October last, when the leaves were beginning to fall."

After a pause Marguerite calmly repeated the words, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Heb. xii. 11, 12.

How burning do these passages come

from the lip of suffering, and seem like voices from heaven when felt and uttered by an agonized soul in the gloomy cell.

“Thanks, thanks,” said Madeleine, “I feel more tranquil, and I can bear to look back on our past home scenes without that same agony of heart.”

“We must pray for them all this night; thank God we desired to bring up our children for Him, and sought their spiritual welfare first. There are Laurent, Magdalene, Bertin, Cyprian, Merle, Susanne, Revel, and our bright Ardoine, and dear Raynald with his generous impulses. I trust he may escape, and yet realize the visions of bliss which he has cherished from childhood. And then look at our little flock of every age; the sweet prattle of the babes and the voices of the boys and girls; oh, indeed, my heart aches when I see all this, and then feel this cold, damp stone. Here, sister, let me cover you with my

dress; God bless and preserve us :
Christ's sake !”

The sisters then lay side by side up
the couch of straw, and, clasping ea
other, soon fell into the sleep of innocer
and faith even in that dank, dark cell.

“ So He giveth his beloved sleep.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE GEHENNA.

WHILST the twins were conversing in their dungeon, two workmen were engaged in the middle of that night in another gloomy chamber in the same corridor. They were surrounded by various sorts of machinery and implements of different kinds and devices. Their attention was directed to one long machine, called the gehenna, composed of a framework of wood, elevated a few feet from the ground, and furnished with cords, straps, rollers, and handles.

“Here, Antonio, lend a hand,” said one of the workmen to his comrade, “or we shall not have finished when the Holy Father comes; I want another staple.”

"There's a large one, will that suit?"

"All right; now throw me the winch, for I must see that this screw moves easily; the Holy Fathers don't like to have things screaming when conversation is going on; I think a drop of oil or hog's lard would be useful here. It would make this bolt slip up and down in the socket, like an eel in the mouth of a Capuchin."

"Here's a flask hanging up, help yourself."

"No, we mustn't have that," growled Guiseppe. "Do you know what it's for?" and he bent his head near his companion, and as if he dared not give utterance to the thought. His companion shuddered, and his face grew pale.

"Santissima Maria!" exclaimed Antonio, crossing himself and saying an *Ave*: "now, Guiseppe, I ask you as a man, do you think the Virgin wants this blood?—is it not horrible to think of such cruelties?"

"Well, Antonio, these Holy Fathers

ought to know their business ; it's a rough way of saving souls, certainly."

"I don't like it," said the other ; "I've a wife and four children as merry as you'd wish to see ; but, bones of my patron, would it not make my flesh creep to think of any of them coming here !"

"No fear of that ; you are good Catholics ; heresy ruins the soul, and they want to save the soul through the body."

"It's odd, but I don't like it, Guiseppe, I don't ; I wish I could get ten minutes' chat with St. Peter, and hear if any one was ever saved this way. As a husband and a father, I don't like it ; are you a father ?"

"Well, yes, I am ; some of mine are grown up and shifting for themselves, but there's one who's being nursed."

"And what do you feel for the babe ? Could you bring yourself to know that it was thrown on this thing, or would you

like your dame to be measured for a pair of boots, stretched on her back here?"

"I can't say, Antonio, that I could exactly," said Guiseppe, as he took his hammer and tapped the various screws and nails in the machine. "Here's a catch, lend me the brad awl; there, I'll scotch this with a pin, and then it will do Father Alexander's work." So saying he went over the machine with his hammer again. The clinking strokes sounded gloomily through the dungeon, and inspired his companion with horror.

"Comrade," said Antonio, "I don't like it. Ah, I hear the bell striking twelve. Blessed Mary! it's the hour that ghosts are scenting their supper in the churchyards."

"You're an old fool," said Guiseppe; "if you're in a fright, down on your knees and cross yourself," said he, jumping on the machine, and sitting on it with his legs dangling down.

“I had much rather have a pipe of this new stuff called tob—tob-ak, or some such name, or a glass of the stuff our old friar shows in his red nose.”

“I always thought, Guiseppe, that you’d a bit of a heart. You’ve known many of these they call heretics, and I am sure they are fair, honest-dealing people. Many kindnesses we had from a family at La Baudène. I have long gone for my groceries to La Tour, and not to Lucerna, for wife says the stuff’s better and the quantity’s more.”

“You put your stomach’s interest before your Church; you want a touch of this,” said Guiseppe, playing with an iron vice: “this is what Father Rorengo calls a conscience scrubber.”

“Nay, you know what wages are now.”

“I don’t know much about it—I only know I should think my head screwed on the wrong way if I couldn’t, at my time of life, live by other people’s labour. I keep

two men, and they keep me. But what have you been earning?"

"I've been working by the job, and had rather a slack time. It's a hard struggle to keep soul and body friends, and we must live."

"But your heretic goods will breed heresy. You'll be having your children with a horn in the forehead and one eye like those of the *barbets*."

"That's only fudge; I've seen several at La Baudène, and they were as good looking as ever I saw—fatter and cleaner than ours, I'll swear."

"Well," said Guiseppe, "tilooru, tilooru—la," continued he, humming "*Guelfo io fui e Gibbelin m'appello*."

"Ah, Guiseppe," replied Antonio, "I thought you'd more of a heart under your ugly skin. Now man, just think; there's that machine on which you are sitting, to-morrow there may be some beautiful girl stretched there screaming and groaning





THE GEHENNA.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

and bleeding, and torn to bits, and all because she won't say '*Ave Maria*,' and go to mass. I say, if they'll ruin themselves, let them do it their own way, and leave them in peace in this world. How would you like your wife, if you love her, to be on those boards to-morrow, and hallooing out your name, if she thought of you then, and hadn't a better to shout?"

"I shouldn't like that, I grant, although I owe her a grudge about dodging me into my neighbour's cottage, and burning my lips with her scalding grits. But as regards the others, things must take their course. The sun will get up to-morrow though you and I bid him stop, and the Pope, the Cardinals, the Friars, and the Monks, will fill heaven and empty hell, or the other thing, their own way. Well, Antonio, I am tired, and I want a nap, which I must take on this stretcher, I suppose. I hope the cords and rollers won't go off with a run and make a martyr of me,

or send me to purgatory before my time. I thought Father Rorengo said he would look in here, and see if all the gear was in working order and the job done."

"I hope he'll pay us cash, for they don't always pay up, these men, for what's done either for the Mistress of heaven or for the Church on earth. Their settlement in the next world doesn't suit a working man like me."

Guiseppe was not allowed to enjoy his slumber long, for the door of the dungeon soon grated on its hinges, and De la Mèna and Rorengo entered.

The lean sepulchral-looking Dominican awoke Guiseppe, and stooping down to examine his work, tried the rollers and pullies.

"It works better now, Guiseppe. Last time it did not run, it caught somewhere. Bring your bill to-morrow."

"Holy Jesuit, will you get on for a minute, as Aristotle would say, *exempli gratiâ*," and the prior's thin parchment cheeks

were tinged with a smile, which added to their ghastliness in the light of his lantern.

“You should put your friend on, the immaculate Franciscan,” said De la Mèna. “I have too much love for this frail tabernacle, to hasten its dissolution. I’ll not let you illustrate your theories on my carcass. But to return the compliment, let me measure you for a pair of shoes, here’s an iron pair—good fit: not too large in the heel, terms moderate, *gratis*, all for nothing.

“Ah,” continued the Jesuit, with a subdued chuckle, “the ministers of the Church understand each other. There’s honour among thieves, and there’s an understanding between the freemasons of the cross. It’s like these indulgences. What would become of you and me, brother, if we did not keep our hold on the mass of men? We should not have either riches, power, or what some of you monks value more than either—the pick of the family. Ha, ha! after all, I think

both Democritus and Heraclitus might find plenty now-a-days to set the eyes of the one and the jaws of the other in motion. What's the doggrel? I learnt it when I was at Bologna. For myself, I am rather of the gnashing lot, and I suppose you belong to the grinners. Is it not so?"


"We're not all alike; tastes differ. For myself, when I've done the Church's work, I like *otium cum dignitate*, or the *brachía Lalage*, as much as the secular; for after all, what does my cowl and gown hide? The same flesh and blood, the same nature as in others; only we have to go to work more slyly, and others sin with a high hand. But what have you got in your hand? Studying now at this time of night?"

"I was looking over our rules. I'll read you out nine, ten, and eleven; they may give you a hint. Now don't fall asleep—I'll read it out, *ore rotundo*, after the most approved of Quinctilian's rules. This is Rule IX. as it stands in the Embrun version:—

“IX. Il ne faut jamais penser de convaincre ces heretiques par les écritures; car il en abusent avec tant de dexterité qu’ils confondent bien souvent par là tous ceux qui les entreprennent, d’où vient aussi que souvent ils prennent occasion de se rendre encore plus opiniâtres, voyans sur tout que des personnes doctes ne savent que leur répondre.

“X. Il ne faut jamais répondre catégoriquement à un heretique et en l’interrogeant, il luy faut accumuler plusieurs interrogats à la fois, afin que de quelle façon qu’il réponde on ait toujours moyen de répliquer, à sa confusion.

“XI. S’il s’en trouve, qui semblent disposés à protester qu’on leur fait tort, et qu’ils n’ont jamais embrassé l’heresie des Vaudois, il faut que l’Inquisiteur les previenne, leur disant qu’ils n’avanceront rien à jurer le faux, et qu’il a des preuves en main plus que suffisantes pour les convaincre: car par ce moyen voyant qu’il n’y a point



d'apparence d'éviter la mort, ils confesseront d'autant plus aisement qu'il leur faut promette en termes ambigus, que s'ils avoient franchement leur crime, ils doivent esperer grace, de cette façon plusieurs y en a qui confesseront dans l'esperance de pouvoir avoir la vie sauve."

"Capital," said the Prior. "There we have the concentrated wisdom of Loyola, Dominic, Torquemada, and dozens of Holy Fathers. I shall keep my ears open, and criticise your questions to-morrow, when our pupil is taking her lesson on this bench."


Thus discoursed the worthy Priests, leaning against the Gehenna, the instrument of conversion, of torture, and of death.

CHAPTER X.

THE MARTYRDOM.

"In meekness instructing them that oppose themselves."—ST. PAUL.

THE cloudless Italian sun was shining in the blue heaven, but to the chamber in which the captive Marguerite stood those bright beams had no access. The room was underground, dark and gloomy; and from the walls being draped with black hangings, it appeared more sombre in the fitful light of the candles. In one corner was a picture of the Virgin, with a burning lamp before it, while over the central chair was a large crucifix, the figure being surmounted by a crown of thorns, and the blood rudely represented flowing from its head, hands, side, and feet. The room



was divided by a curtain. At the upper end was a high table, at which sat the officers of the Inquisition and some of the members of the *Consilium de Propagandâ Fide, et extirpandis Hæreticis*. The Archbishop sat in the central chair, while near him were Rorengo, Prior of Lucerna; Placido Corso; De la Mèna, Confessor to the Duke; and Malvicino, Confessor to the Marchioness. The office of the Holy Fathers was to examine the criminals, and afford them to the last the opportunity of recanting. An hour-glass and a bell were on the table, besides pens, ink, and paper for the secretary or notary, who faithfully registered the questions and answers.

“Daughter,” said De la Mèna, addressing Marguerite, “you can read yon inscription: ‘And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.’ 1 Cor. xiii. 13. We have out of love to your soul examined you touching your faith, and your differences from the


Holy Church of Rome, founded on St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles. You have shown an obstinacy not to be expected in a woman, which convinces us that your heresy must be of the devil. Your husband has recanted, and been reconciled."

"Here is his certificate," interrupted Malvicino. "He awaits you, and longs to rejoin you if you will but recant."

"Never," replied the intrepid prisoner. "Not for husband or children will I abjure. I will sacrifice all for Christ."

"In love to your soul we deliver your body over to the secular power, in fervent hope that your spirit may be saved. As for your sister we trust that our reasonings will convince her, and that we shall receive her as a loving daughter into the bosom of our Holy Church."

Marguerite said nothing. She looked De la Mèna steadily in the face, and the subtle Jesuit trembled under the sifting glance of that woman's eye.



“Saviour of my soul,” she uttered, looking upwards and clasping her hands, “Saviour, who hast enabled woman to triumph in Thy name, be with me. Suffer me not for any pains of death to fall from thee.”

“Daughter,” interposed the sleek Jesuit, “it grieves me to see you thus obstinate to the last; but we trust the gentle punishment which we in our charity award you may bring forth fruit in the salvation of your soul. Even now, daughter, my heart yearns over you. Kiss this crucifix. Say ‘Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for us miserable sinners.’ Swear to go to mass, and you shall be reinstated in all the possessions that belong to your family.”

“Mock me not; add not blacker hypocrisies to your cruelties. Take my poor body; wreak on it your boasted charity; the soul is beyond your grasp, and I commit that into the hands of Him alone who redeemed it, Jesus the Son of God. He is with me. I feel his support in a

way I could not have believed. My sister, my words were true that God would not leave me nor forsake me. O my poor Jean ! I do not believe that he has recanted. I feel sure that he was faithful unto death, and that the certificate is a false one, to deceive me."

"Officers of the Holy Inquisition," exclaimed the Jesuit, his eye flashing with anger, "hand over this daughter of Satan to the secular power ; bid them nevertheless use their best endeavours to convert her soul, so that we may save her, as St. Paul says, even by fire, and give her eternal life, though she trampleth on the gift. Brothers, servants of our Holy Father, let us pray for the soul of our sister, that our good wishes for her may receive full accomplishment."


Standing up, the Priests joined in chanting the Hymn :—

"Veni, Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte cœlitus,
Lucis tuæ radium.
Da tuis fidelibus,

" In te confitentibus,
Sacrum septenarium.
Da virtutis meritum,
Da salutis exitum,
Da perenne gaudium.
Amen."

This prayer was heard and answered in a way the speakers did not contemplate. The curtain which concealed the second half of the chamber was drawn aside, and an awful machinery was displayed to view. Two or three pullies were fixed in the ceiling with ropes hanging to the ground, stained with blood. In the middle of the room was a sort of wooden trough, furnished with cords, rollers, and handles. Various articles of shining metal were arranged round the walls—gloves, vices in which particles of flesh still putrefied, iron boots pierced with holes for nails to be driven in, branding irons, and two or three small braziers. A furnace glowed in the depth of the recess, and cast a lurid light on the adjacent objects. Two figures emerged,

clothed in black gowns, with cords round their waists and black cowls over their faces, disclosing only their glistening eyes. The spectacle was such as might have appalled the leader of a forlorn hope, and the officer who was on guard involuntarily trembled as he surveyed the fearful armoury of the Apostolic Church. It was, of a truth, the Church Militant here on earth. "The weapons of our warfare," said Paul, "are not carnal," but the Church of Rome has had later revelations. In the catalogue of this "whole armour" of the Church were thumb-screws to adjust the conscience, a set of pulleys and cords to enlighten the understanding, which might be darkened by this phase of Lutheranism. Iron shoes were ready to be heated that the converts might be "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," while a machine called the rack made the most tender appeals to the affections of those whose malady was some subtle taint of Calvinism.



Strange devices these to win love from human hearts ! A cruel satire even on their Madonna, and mad homage to offer the self-sacrificing, crucified Saviour, robbing as it did the one of all the tenderness of womanhood, and the other of all vestige of humanity ! O liberty, thou hast been apostrophized on the scaffold, where thou hast been satirised by thy professed worshippers ! O religion, we may in like manner invoke thee in the inquisitorial dungeons of the Church of Rome ! Such appliances were the artillery of hell, and the abomination of heaven.

The executioners seized the helpless Marguerite, and stripping her of her outer garments cast her on the Gehenna. They tied down her hands and feet to the wooden framework, and the deadly rollers began to creak. The tightening of the cords was heard and the straining of the limbs, until at last a shriek of agony burst from the unhappy sufferer as the blood poured from her mouth and ears.

“ O God, O Saviour, have mercy on me. Lord, for the love of Jesus ! My God, support——”

“ Implore the Virgin now.”

“ We have only one mediator,” replied a feeble voice.

“ O Jesus, O my Lord, grace, grace.”

At a nod from the Jesuit the executioners slackened their ropes, and then tightened them. Again was the awful process gone through, though the limbs seemed wrenched from the body, and were powerless to obey the motions of the will. The victim's face stood bathed in sweat mingled with blood, her eyes started from their sockets, her raven hair was matted and gory, and neither father, nor sisters, nor children could have recognised the beloved member of the circle of La Baudène.

“ Well, president,” said Rorengo, the Dominican Prior, “you're busy at this upper end of the room. What are you after ?”

“ I'm only engaged in a work of art.

Look, whilst the notary has been taking down your speeches I have made a sketch in ink, and not badly done I think. Can you recognize yourself?"

"I'm tired," said Rorengo, "make room for me. Notary, don't write down her wicked speeches, lest they should breed heresy in others."

"Well, Delegate," added the Prior, when he was seated, "what is the news from Turin? Is the talk true about your friend, the Marquis of Lucerna? It was reported so at the Duke of Montafon's last week."

"Really! I hope he has not broken, for he gives good entertainments; rather fond of the dice, but his wine is excellent; it reminds me of the old vintage at the Camaldoli."

At this moment the screams of the poor sufferer rose above everything, and drowned the voices of the two ecclesiastics.

"*Per Baccho*, that's a good twinge for the cursed Calvinist."

"The vines look well this year," said Rorengo, playing with the hour-glass; "no signs of the disease."

"I suppose you are interested in them; is it for the stomach or the pocket? But look, you're meddling with the sands of time; you'll be giving our patient an extra five minutes."

"Come now, don't be turning inquisitor on me; I sell my berries for the Church's good, and drink the Pope's health every night. That's not a bad catch, that dreamy barber extemporised the other night."

"What is it?"

"My voice is so hoarse with questions that I can't hum at all; it tickled the Duke's daughter, and made her laugh. She is a fine girl. Good eyes; I wish I had a few such among the heretics to convert: I would embrace them with the arms of the Church's mercy."

"I think another Council of Trent is

needed, brother, if you're a sample of us all. I hope for our credit's sake you're not sent anywhere as confessor to a convent of nuns; but, really, you're quite witty to-day: I did not know that you cloaked any humour under your cloak."

"No *tu quoque*! look at this snuff-box; I gave six scudi for it, and the snuff's good; you get it at a little shop in the street that runs near the palace."

"Halloa, what are they doing? I suppose she's fainted, or are they going to vary the means? Then let us pray." There was a momentary silence in the room, and nought was heard save the gasps of the victim, and the drops of blood falling upon the pavement. Cordials soon recovered the sufferer, and Malvicino gazed on her face as he watched the return of sensation.

"*Miserere sorori nostræ, et salvam fac!*" chanted the ecclesiastics, amid the shrieks and groans of the unhappy woman.

"There's quite an excitement in con-

verting, is there not?—as to whether they'll give in at first. I'll bet you five ducats yon woman will take four screws more."

"Well, brother, why don't they keep friends with the Church?—a whole skin is a comfort when one washes, but rack my bones, how many centuries have we been working in these gullies, and yet the cursed Apostolicals still cackle there."

"Why, Father Placido, you look pale, like that young officer who's keeping the door; he's new to this sort of work."

"And so am I. I don't like this method of conversion—it gives me indigestion. I shall not be able to sleep, those screams will haunt me, and I shall hear them on my death-bed."

"You're nervous; it's a service to the Church the riddance of this carrion; 'the men of the religion,' as they are called. You know it's written, 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.' Here, read what

Innocent VIII. says, in his Bull of 1487, and let that soothe you."

"Nos inter hujusmodi Sectam detestabilem et premissos ipsius execrandos errores ne propagentur ulterius, necce per eos corda fidelium damnabiliter corrumpantur ab Ecclesiâ Catholicâ, prout ex debito Pastoralis Officii tenemur evellere; et radicitus extirpare, ac hujusmodi temerarios ausus reprimere cupientes, omnes conatus nostros adhibere, omnemque sollicitudinem impendere decrevimus."

"Call upon the Virgin and the Saints," said the Franciscan abbot, stooping over Marguerite; "the Immaculate Virgin, who was born without sin, can feel for sinners, she will pardon you."

"Don't delude her with your perjury," retorted the lank Dominican prior; "the Virgin was not immaculate, St. Thomas Aquinas tells us she was born in original sin."

"Uncoffined ghost of a Dominican, do

you dare to impugn a doctrine which the Church receives?"

"Perhaps you were not taught at Padua," said the other with a sneer, "that your doctrine was only invented in 1389. How did the Church do without it so long before?"

"Marco Aurelio Rorengo," replied Malvicino, "may the immaculate Queen give you the hottest place in purgatory, where all the Dominicans are."

"Where's your sect, then, if I shall not find them there? I know by revelation that there are no Franciscans in heaven."

"You Jansenist," said Malvicino, his eyes flashing fire, "your white scapulary and black hood only shroud a Calvinist; holy Jesuit, this man is your enemy as much as he's mine. He differs with you about grace, free-will, and predestination."

"Ah, you'll bring in Molina, and his doctrine," retorted the Prior, "when you want peace. I differ with you all, and the

world knows the Dominicans alone can be right. As regards Jansenius, you could neither invent his five points nor refute them, though you slept with the Augustinus under your pillow for a century."

"By all the Popes in hades! By Pope Alexander! who—" exclaimed Malvicino, forgetting in his rage his smattering of ecclesiastical history, "who would have cursed the Dominicans," muttered the Jesuit to himself at the upper end of the room, supplying the parenthesis. "Come, brothers," said he aloud, approaching the men, whose flashing eyes and clenched hands betokened a desperate fray, "unity is the Church's watchword: we are doing battle with Satan. You know that *domus dissidens adversus seipsam non stabit*."

"You grey friar, if your heart's as black as your beard, you're sure spoil for Satan," cried the Dominican, grasping his rosary and crucifix.

"Count your beads," retorted Malvi-

cino, with a sneer. "Play with Dominic's rattle to keep old women quiet. Your rosary, at least, was born of original sin."

"Perhaps you teach that Anna, the mother of Mary, was immaculate; and in that case you boast a chain of immaculates up to Eve, of which you are the last specimen. How much pocket-money do you make a year by keeping the accounts of your kidnapping institution?"

"Come, ye are brothers," interposed De la Mèna, "let not the heat of the schools interrupt our work of faith and labours of love. I must bid you chant together the verse appointed for Laudes, on Quinquagesima, which you had not long ago."

"Daughter," continued De la Mèna, addressing the writhing form, "daughter, it grieves my heart to see you thus. The Church mourns to have recourse to such measures to win back your faith. Kiss this crucifix, daughter, and I will yet give you plenary absolution for this world and the next."

“Leave me, leave me!” gasped the sufferer, wildly rolling her eyes from side to side, in her piteous agony ; “ O Jesus ! be with me ; let thy Holy Spirit keep me faithful. I see that bright land before me ; I will, I will hold fast. Oh, my sisters ! my Madeleine—Ardoine, Ardoine. Raynald, you love her ; save her from this.”

As the officer heard this name, he stopped suddenly ; a feeling of faintness came over him, which obliged him to lean against the wall. He convulsively clutched his sword, for one moment meditating attacking the priests, and releasing the victim ; but he was soon convinced of the futility of such an attempt, and remembering his appointment with Ardoine, determined to rescue her at all hazards from a similar fate.

“Look at this certificate ; your husband recanted, why can’t you. Do you know his handwriting ?” continued De la Mèna, holding up the parchment before

her glazing eye. "She won't read it—there, officer, hold this certificate. Ha! I've smeared it. Hold it while I show her my crucifix, and see if I can convert her at the eleventh hour."

Echard wiped the document, and thrust it into his breast.

"Repent; cry, '*Jesu, Maria.*'"

"The blood of Jesus—cleanseth—from—
—all—"

"Perish! accursed daughter of a Babylonish harlot," screamed the priest, as he stooped down and spat in her face. "We excommunicate your soul, and cast you into the gulf prepared for the devil and his angels. Gentlemen," continued he, addressing the attendants, "our forbearance is ill requited; we stay not your hands now. The Church supplicates no more mercy for yon heretic, but bids the secular arm do what it were unfitting her character she should do herself."

The two familiars went forwards, and

unbound the mangled and powerless body. Laying her down on the floor, they washed the implements of torture, and threw the remnants of the blood-stained water into her face.

"If thou hast not been baptized," chanted De la Mèna, "we baptize thee in the name of the Holy Church."

"Amen!" replied those at the upper end of the first room.

Having searched among their instruments, they found a pair of pliers, and stretching out Marguerite's right hand, grasped hold of the nail of the forefinger. A wrench—a shriek from the half-dead form—and then the bloody nail is cast on the cold pavement, and trampled upon by these ordained priests. The same act is repeated, until at last each finger of that hand is without a nail. A motion is visible, as if she would join her left hand to it for her last prayer.

"My Saviour, my Saviour, I come;

Thou wilt make amends for all—victory through Thy blood—‘Come . . . me ye . . . labour, I will . . . give you rest.’”

“The mass, the mass!” shouted Malvicino in solemn mockery, for the sufferer had passed the point when recall to life would have been possible.

“‘The Lord . . . is good—the Lord is . . . good!’” gasped Marguerite.

They were her last words.

Thou Word of God! whose pages are bathed with human tears, and whose sentences are uttered by the lip of suffering from generation to generation, thine are the last accents heard on the bed of death, like music on the rack, and like angels’ voices amid the blazing pile. Thy brightest sentences were begotten of suffering, and they now stand forth as symbols of hope to those who mourn. Lips, trembling with their last breath, smile, and the glazing eye is lightened up with its last flash of intel-

ligence at the sound of thy words. Thou hast thy triumph where it is most glorious, in sorrow, sickness, and death, where all else is impotent; yea, beyond death, for thou art legible by thine own light, even above the ghastly grave.

“Cry ‘Hail, Mary,’” shouted the Prior Rorengo, “we will still open to you the gates of Paradise, and remit you the flames of purgatory. Move your hand, if you hear, and recant.”

No sound, no motion came from the mangled remains, but the lips could be seen to quiver in voiceless prayer.

“Brother,” said De la Mèna, “it is deplorable to see this soul pass into hell-fire !”

“You have not tried the fire,” replied the other; “it may be a taste of it in this world would save her from it in the next. Fetch hither yon brazier.”

Having oiled her feet, they placed under them a lighted candle; they took out of

the fire a red-hot brand, and stamped it on her forehead, and then, taking the burning coals out of the brazier, sprinkled them over the body. Its dying struggles were terrible, for the relics of sensation still lingered. The slight covering which she had on caught fire, and the body was enveloped in flames. Alas! who could have recognised the twin sister, in that charred mass?

Happy Marie, who didst die in thy bed!

Happy Marguerite, whom grace enabled to overcome death, and to whom the Lord shall give the crown of life!

A truce to her struggles, for she is no more! The wreck is left in the hands of those who can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do.

The executioners gathered up the remains, and wrapping it in a bloody cloth, on which was figured the arms of the Pope, carried it away, to cast it into a dungeon.

There lie, O body ! forlorn and broken.
 The hairs of thine head are still numbered
 by Him who loves thee to the end. Fear
 not, thine ashes shall break forth resplen-
 dent with immortal beauty in the day when
 the Lord ariseth to judge the earth. Then
 shall body and soul meet again in triumph,
 never to be parted, and the days of thy
 suffering thou shalt remember no more.

* * * * *

“Religio cogi non debet : verbis potius
 quam verberibus res agenda est. Longè
 diversa sunt carnificina et pietas, nec potest
 aut veritas cum vi, aut justitia cum crude-
 litate conjungi : cur ergo tam crudeliter
 vexant, cruciant, debilitant, si salvos
 volunt ? aut unde pietas tam impia ut eos
 miseris modis perdant, aut inutiles faciant
 quibus velint esse consultum.”—*Iactantius*
 (about A.D. 350).

CHAPTER XI.

MADELEINE.

“Being destitute, afflicted, tormented.”—HEB. xi. 37.

MADELEINE remained alone in her prison, torn by the most agonizing fears. Her sister, who had comforted and consoled her, and whose presence had made even that gloomy dungeon tolerable, had been taken from her, and she felt that she should see her no more. In her distress, to whom could she turn, save to Him who is a present help in time of trouble? She bent the knee and bowed the head in that damp cell, as she poured out her soul to that glorious Mediator who sits at the right hand of God.

After some hours, De la Mèna came into the dungeon with a lantern.

"We have come," said he, "to receive your recantation, to welcome you into the bosom of the Holy Church."

"Never," replied Madeleine, "never will I desert the faith of my fathers."

"Your sister entreats you," replied De la Mèna.

"I do not believe it. Marguerite, if thou art dead, thou wert true to the last. Oh, would that I had died first!"

"So you won't recant," said the Jesuit. "Then in that case we must appeal to your flesh, and you may prepare for the rack or the stake."

"God can preserve me, I will trust in Him."

Some time in the night, after the departure of the Jesuit, the door was opened and something thrown into the dungeon.

Madeleine for a long time dared not approach the object. At last she felt it. There was a cloth which felt wet—with what she could not tell, for it was dark.

Again she stretched out her hand. It rested upon what seemed to be the hand of a human being ; but a thrill of horror flashed through the unhappy prisoner as she discerned that the hand had been mutilated. . Madeleine threw herself back in the corner of the dungeon, and clasping her hands, turned her eyes upwards—a mute appeal visible to God in the darkness of the cell. Summoning up resolution she again approached the body. Beyond doubt it was a human being, and it had been charred by the flame.

Her brow was bathed in sweat, which dropped upon the object beneath. Her heart heaved tumultuously as the idea dawned on her that it was the corpse of some one who was martyred for the truth's sake. It might be her sister. She dared not shape the question. She stretches forth her hand again; she feels the scathed tresses, and the form of the countenance; she argues not; she feels not; she withdraws

not her hand. She falls upon the body in the dark, damp dungeon, insensible alike to her position and sorrows.

* * * * *

It was some time before Madeleine regained her consciousness; and with it the pangs of memory and despair. She dared not interrogate the present, nor reflect as to the probable end. Without doubt Marguerite had perished. How the past floated before her now, with the poignant rush of memory; how bright the family scenes of La Baudène seemed to the lone sister in that drear dungeon. O merciful God! will no angel from heaven release that struggling spirit? How plaintively did Marguerite's late conversation ring in her ears. But yesternight she had clasped her, and they had slept as sisters in that cold vault: now she knelt alone on the same chilling stone, by the side of the dead. There was this ray of consolation, Marguerite was in heaven, having witnessed a good confession

of faith. She had partaken Christ's sufferings, and should share the glory which He had with the Father before the world began; and the verdict of Inspiration assured her that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed. Then Madeleine's spiritual joy ebbed, and natural grief overpowered her reasonings.

* * * * *

Time rolls on. The air gets tainted. Those fiends in human form have left the unburied body to be the solace of the living. Time rolls on. The young and joyous reck not of the flight of time; not so the broken-hearted and the agonized. The hours roll on; the end must come. That prison has become a double grave. There are two corpses in that dungeon, lying in one mingled mass. The sisters were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.

* * * * *

ocean!" amongst thy many treasures thou bearest the burnt ashes of the saints. Thy crested breakers are protests in the sight of heaven, tossing aloft those sacred particles, which await the resurrection of the just. It is nature's apologue, as hath been remarked of old.

The words gasped in dungeons, in the hidden valleys bounded by the Pelice and the Clusone, have echoed like the blast of a trumpet to the confines of Italy: and it may be said of unknown thousands who have been martyred in the cells of the Inquisition, "though dead their memorial has not perished with them, for their sound has gone out to all lands, and their words to the end of the earth."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAMP.

GOD is love, and the kingdom of God is peace; and the Almighty hath transfused creation with these secret homilies! How often is nature embodying a latent parable, to turn our thoughts upwards and to shame the deeds of blood that disfigure the earth!

Nature in her true character is the daughter of heaven, and though the sin of man hath well-nigh dissevered the link, still the faint impress of the beautiful and good hallows her, and makes us long for our creation to blend once more with that which is above.


The annual resurrection of spring, the miracle of the blossoming of Aaron's rod, repeated on a world-wide scale; the leaf uncurled from its silken hood with a delicacy that baffles rivalry; the shifting hues of colour, as if Nature had dipped her skirts in the liquid rainbow; the mystic silence with which a continent is appalled, noiseless as an archangel's flight from heaven; the goodness and beauty with which the earth teems, as with the overflowings of an upper Paradise; are shadows of better things, lessons to the heart of man, of truth, of peace, of liberty, and above all, of LOVE. And in heaven God hath set two great lights to rule the day and the night, neither speechless nor uninformative as they stand in the portals of the King's palace.

It is the night! the night of Saturday the 17th of April, 1655. Nature hath put off her apparel of gold, and clothed herself with silver. The moon, night's vestal, who by her borrowed beams preaches the existence

of the invisible, shines in the deep blue sky of Italy, and drowns the twinkling stars as if she would disown her satellites. Such, at least, might Petrarch have conjectured before Galileo's glass began to rescue nature from the misjudging eye of sense.

How sweetly the moonlight sleeps upon the rugged crags that frown upon the Valley of Lucerna! How brightly yon snow glistens in that chaste shower of light! the ridge of Castelluzzo is sharply edged against the sky; the massed and gloomy pine forests, dappled with light and shade, appear more mysterious than in the blazing day; the stream quivers in the pale light, which, refracted like the sunshine, casts a fainter shadow upon the rocky bed beneath.

Heaven is at peace, save that in the distance over yon western range a floating rain-cloud drips, in whose falling shower is wreathed the beauteous tracery of a lunar rainbow, as if to afford the moon the



opportunity of enforcing her less-acknowledged lessons of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Fair queen of night ! Heaven's changeless changeling ! whose unequal empire is from dusk to dawn, I beheld thee yester-eve calm and silent, not bereft of thy inspirations for these later generations, just as at this time two hundred and eight Easters ago, thou didst cast thy silvery shadows on the scene of which I now write.

But the moonlight fell on other objects besides those of unarmed nature. It shone on the morion, it caused the cuirass to glitter, it glanced from the blade of the yet bloodless sword. It lit up a camp which was not far from the entrance of the Valley of Lucerna. The ensign of the Marquis of Pianesse was upreared side by side with those which had been blessed by archiepiscopal hands. In one quarter the *Fleur-de-lis* announced the subjects of Louis XIV.,

who were under Grancey; on the other side the arms of the city of Turin were borne by the regiment commanded by Galeazzo. The regiment of Chablais was commanded by the Prince de Montafon, and the Marquis of St. Damian commanded another bearing his name. A rabble from Bavaria, and a band of twelve hundred Irish cut-throats brought up the number of the army to nearly fifteen thousand men, missionaries of the cross, and heralds of the kingdom of heaven!

Alas! before the moon pales her shadows those volcanic passions will have blazed, and the light will fall on clotted blood as well as on the stainless snow.


The army of the Marquis had halted in the plain which extends from Les Appiots to Pra-la-Féra, and Les Eyral. It was eight o'clock in the evening when the Marquis of Pianesse stepped out of his tent into the moonlight, and looked upon that fairy view whose exquisite beauty might have

softened his heart towards the inhabitants of that valley. He saw the distant range of Alps in their dazzling whiteness, and a fierce smile crossed his face as he clenched his sword, saying—

“Blessed Mary, I’ll soon make those mountain torrents redder before they reach this place. How now, Prince, is that you?”

“Good evening, General, a fine night for our enterprise. Heaven smiles on our crusade. I can’t help laughing when I think how you tricked those heretic deputies.”

“I’ve certainly stolen a march on them,” replied the Marquis, with a sarcastic smile. “They came to me yesterday afternoon, and I told them to come again this morning and bring their petition, when we should hear them. Of course I had been getting my men ready, and I galloped off last night secretly; so I don’t suppose they found me at home this morning, unless they knocked very loud.”



“Your act is worthy of a statesman as well as a saint, and you have read Machiavelli and Bellarmine to some purpose; but what’s our next move? There’s no official prosecution out against these people—can you take further steps?”

“Wait and see, I’m expecting my messenger back—ah, here he is. Well, Cattalin, did you tell the *barbets* of La Tour that I wanted supper and beds to-night for eight hundred infantry and three hundred cavalry?”

“I did, my lord, and they said, ‘How can his Royal Highness command us to find lodging for his soldiers, in a place where, by his last edict, we ourselves are prohibited from dwelling?’”

“Then why did you not ask them why they were there themselves?”

“I did, and they replied that they were there on business, but that they had removed their residences to within the appointed limits. They said it was impossible

to find quarters, that no preparation had been made, and they asked for delay to consider the matter."

"Delay! Yes, this is my delay," said the Marquis, unslinging his bugle, and giving a loud blast. "Order the two front divisions to march at once upon La Tour, and take it by a *coup de main*. Prince, to your post. I bid you sup with me in a couple of hours in the Convent of La Tour."

* * * *

The morning of the Sabbath-day has dawned. The sun has displaced the moon, that heaven might not be left without a witness of these acts of blood. The streets of La Tour are filled with bands of riotous and drunken soldiers, who are running frantically about with drawn swords, crying out, "*Viva la Santa Chiesa Romana! Ammazzi! Ammazzi!*"

In the cathedral a large crowd is gathered, and the organ peals forth the

chant of the "*Te Deum*." The Marquis of Pianesse "with all his nobility"* listens to the strain, and crosses himself, while an expression of joy lights his face, as between the intervals of the hymn he hears the distant shouts of the brutal soldiers in the streets. "*Viva la santa fede, e guai agli Barbetti.*"

* "*Con tutta la sua nobiltà*"—an expression of the contemporary writings.


CHAPTER XIII.

THE JAILER.

AFTER the events in the Chamber of the Inquisition, Echard had been appointed the temporary jailer of another heretic, by the command of the Council. As he paced up and down before the cell his breast was filled with the most harrowing doubts when he reflected on the past. What he had seen was engraven on his heart with a pen of iron. When he had beheld that sufferer on the rack, he had felt for one moment an impulse to take vengeance on the murderers, and to protest against the shedding of innocent blood. Then, like Pilate, his courage ebbed, and his heart became numbed, and

he could not act ; but nevertheless emotions all tending to one end, were crowding in upon his soul. He had wept with pity as he stood on the ruins of La Baudène ; he had listened to the simple defence of David and Jean, whose words had remained stamped upon his memory ; he had seen those cruelties of hell inflicted on a helpless woman on account of her creed ; he had beheld her steadfastness, and caught some of her dying speeches. Conscience was lashing him to agony, and speaking as with a voice of thunder. Not only did he feel an innate repugnance to these horrors from which Mahomet's followers might have abstained, but he had heard a fuller exposition of those principles which enabled these people to triumph over death. These doubts and fears were swelling like the mountain stream after the thunderstorm. The orthodox apologies for persecutions which he had learned in early life, the dogmas about unity, catholicity, and antiquity, floated

before him ; but their superficial gloss could not mask the guilt of shedding blood. There was a sublime simplicity shown in the words and actions of those so-called heretics, and if creeds must be judged by their fruits his conscience scrupled not as to its verdict. Was heaven to be colonized with fire and sword ? Had the conscience to be trained to virtue with racks and thumbscrews ? Had souls to be ushered into eternal bliss by refinements of torture which heathendom could not exceed, and indeed hardly equal ? Look at those snow-clad crags, bathed in sunshine, piercing to heaven. Let those Alps, the crystal habitation of the God of nature, surround the seething, lurid cities of the plain which edge the shore of the Dead Sea. Look on this picture and on that, and read in nature the parable of our present history. As Echard paced before the cell rent with these feelings his thoughts turned to his prisoner, and partly from compassion and partly from desire to allay the agonies



of conscience, he determined to converse with her. Turning the key gently in the door, he entered the dungeon, and saw the helpless woman, in her garb of mourning, crouching in a corner. "Madam," said Echard in a gentle voice, "I have intruded on you to see if I can do anything for your comfort. I think you are an inhabitant of these valleys?"

"Oh, sir, have you come to torment me by reviving the memories of the past? We lived at La Baudène, which is now destroyed."

"Ah, the farm on the road from La Tour to Pignerol?"

"The same: we were six sisters wedded to six brothers. Oh, to think of the wreck of our home!"

"Madam, do you not remember me? I have been there, and I think I saw you once."

"Indeed, sir! indeed, sir!" replied Martha, trembling. "I think the tones of

your voice are not strange to my ear. Did you know any of our family?"

"I was the bearer of Gastaldo's edict. I was there on the 28th of January, when I saved Ardoine's life and protected the bedridden invalid."

"Oh, sir, do you know Ardoine? How could you save her? What happened to sister Marie? Explain, I beseech you. If this be so you are a friend in disguise. When did this happen?"

"On the 28th of January, the day for the enforcement of Gastaldo's edict."

"Alas, I remember it," rejoined Martha, weeping bitterly; "I was torn from my home, and taken prisoner on that day. Oh, Janavel, my children, perhaps you have wept over me as dead."

"Calm yourself, madam. God may have sent you a protector when you least expected it."

"Oh, sir, I trust you are not deceiving me. Now I remember you, and I see your

jewelled sword, which you grasped when you nearly fought with my boy Raynald. It was you who enforced the edict when I implored you not; and now I fear you have come to mock me."

"Misjudge me not. The scenes I have witnessed in this convent are enough to make me abjure my creed. I fear the one whom I saw perish on the rack was related to you, for I heard her cry Ardoine and some other names."

"O Heaven! was it Ardoine? Poor Raynald, it will kill thee. Thou didst love her. Or was it Marguerite? Had she dark hair? Help me, for I shall faint."

Echard stretched out his hand and supported Martha, while he whispered, "It was not Ardoine. Let me support you. Thank God, she died as a martyr, and is now in heaven. Her speeches are stamped upon my memory, and I trust may bring forth fruit in my conversion, for I hate the deed of blood done in the name of religion."

“Then you do not join in persecuting us?”

“I abhor conversions on the rack,” replied Echard, shuddering; “I would convert you, but only by calm reasoning.”

“Ah, sir, have you read the Bible? It sanctions no tortures for the truth’s sake. We read of what our blessed Saviour endured because our sins were on Him, that we might not suffer. He is our hope and our example!”

“But do you not worship the Virgin?”

“We do not worship her, but we respect her, as the mother of the Messiah’s humanity. Oh, sir, think what the Scripture says, ‘Neither is there salvation in any other.’ ‘This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’”

“How, then, do you hope to be saved?” inquired the officer, listening attentively.

“By simply trusting to the blood of Jesus. We have neither purgatory nor

indulgences. We need none of these things. The blood of Christ Jesus cleanses us from all our sins. It would insult Him if we were to add anything to what He has done, as if his work were not complete."

"This sort of truth goes to one's heart and understanding," answered Echard. "I confess since I was at Rome I distrust all these intercessors between the sinner and his Saviour more and more."

"There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Oh, look to Him, and He will help, guide, and save you!" replied the woman, listening to the young man's voice with marked interest.

Strangers till now in person and creed, it seemed as if some invisible bond of friendship were unconsciously drawing them together. Echard paused for a moment, as he reflected how he might save her from her impending fate. His honour as a soldier forbid him betraying his trust, but his pity as a man prevailed, and he felt that

the office of guarding this helpless woman for the crime of heresy was derogatory to his character, and that his duty would be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. "Madam," whispered he at length, "my heart prompts me to help you. There is a secret door in a passage underground near here, which is known to few. I will let you escape. I think I can manage to avoid detection. I could not let you run the risk of enduring what I have seen your countrywoman suffer to-day."

"Speak, speak; was she my sister? Is she dead? What did they do to her? Was she true to the last?"

"Stay not to ask. You see the fruit of her patience. I risk honour, yea and life, to rescue you from the same fate. Flee to the mountains. Do not stay in the valleys, nor go to La Baudène, which is in ruins. I dread to tell you of the storm that hangs over your churches." Echard then led Martha out into the stone corridor,

and they crept stealthily along until they descended to a massive iron grating. Unlocking this they traversed another underground passage, whose sides were green with moss and damp, and from the top of which the water dropped through from the earth above. This terminated in a small iron door. Unlocking this they forced themselves through a narrow aperture, and stepped outside the convent walls into the fresh night air. Martha seized Echard's hand, and pressed it to her lips, breathing a fervent prayer that God would bless her deliverer, and guide him into all truth. Echard returned immediately to the convent, and Martha stood alone. She hesitated for a moment as to what direction she should take. She turned her eye with a feeling of horror on the turrets of the gloomy convent. Her sister had doubtless perished in that place. She trembled as she considered her own peril, had not the generous efforts of that young officer released her. She felt un-

bounded gratitude for his noble hazarding of himself for her sake, while his frank spirit and his aversion to persecution seemed proofs of the nobility of his soul. The sound of his voice had charmed her ear, and exercised a soothing influence on her mournful heart. And yet she felt misgivings, for she had seen the glitter of his uniform, and she knew that he bore a sword which Rome commanded him to sheath in the bosom of those who were aliens in creed. She stood irresolute whither to flee. She could not go to La Baudène, which had been ravaged by fire and sword, and might be in the possession of the Irish, and the family nucleus at Villar had been doubtless scattered. Rodolphe, her father, and her husband, Janavel, might have taken refuge, as was proposed, on the hills of Angrogna. She would go there first, as Echard had suggested, and if she did not find them she would then seek the remnant who might have escaped to Rora.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HAWK AND THE DOVE.

ARDOINE was still at Villar with Iolande, Raynald, and several other members of the family, who delayed their departure to Angrogna or Rora, expecting the return of Marguerite and Madeleine from their mission to La Tour.

Ardoine anxiously awaited her next meeting with Echard. At its prospect her heart fluttered with undefined sensations, which seemed to hover between the limits of pain and pleasure, and the pulse of the maiden quickened as she in imagination touched his hand and heard him pronounce her name. But in addition to this she

trusted that Echard might befriend them, in case of any misfortune befalling her aunts.

Untrained in the art of dissembling, Ardoine could not veil the sorrow and interest which occupied her thoughts; and Iolande with a woman's penetration, soon divined that some secret lay hidden in her heart. Her jealousy of Ardoine, which she had felt principally on account of her beauty and character, had been inflamed of late.

Iolande had known Echard at Turin, and had loved him with the freshness of a first love. Not long before she had incidentally heard that he had been the bearer of Gastaldo's edict to La Baudène, and she had been tormented by jealous fears lest he should have seen Ardoine. Moreover she had noticed the change in Ardoine's manner—her flushed cheek and anxious expression, the secret sigh, the late unexplained absence, all seemed signs of a mystery, which Iolande resolved to fathom.

Ardoine on her part felt inclined to trust her friend with the secret, but refrained from delicacy and from the occasional manifestation of Iolande's jealousy, which broke forth in sudden fits, though the latter did her best to suppress it, and to retain Ardoine's affection.

No one in the family, much less the guileless Ardoine, had suspected her true character, or thought that she was a spy to plot their ruin, and they continued to treat her with an unreserved kindness, enhanced by their afflictions.

"Sister," said Iolande, addressing Ardoine, "how grateful I feel for the religious knowledge I have received in your circle! Alas, how sad it is to see you thus scattered! I cannot help looking back to La Baudène, as if it were my own home. You were all so happy there."

"Oh don't talk of it, Iolande. My heart cannot dwell on it."

"Let me help to bear your grief, and

to comfort you. I feel so united to you that I am always longing for your company. I quite missed you the other evening, when you were absent so long."

"I went out," replied Ardoine, "to calm my spirits by wandering among those hills where I could lift up my heart to God for strength to bear all He might appoint. And I strolled on a little until I caught sight of our old fields, and I could not resist going to the spot once more."

"I wonder you were not afraid to go alone. What led you to run into such danger?"

"My heart led me," answered Ardoine, blushing, "to visit my mother's grave."

"But you were away a long time, and came back alone; and now that you have returned you seem to have a heavy load on your heart. Cannot you tell it to your adopted sister? Let me offer you my sympathy, and prove the depth of my affection by sharing your sorrows."

“Thank you, Iolande; do you not think that there is enough to cloud my brow when I look back at the past, and see my friends scattered, my home ruined, and all of us outcasts?”

“Oh, Ardoine! do not allude to the past; you are ever looking to that. Our Church has erred grievously, I know. But tell me your present grief; you have not told me what has weighed on you so much within the last few days.”

“‘The heart,’ say the Scriptures, ‘knoweth its own bitterness,’ and every one of us has some private griefs.”

“But let me lighten yours by sharing them, sister Ardoine.”

“Some sorrows we cannot share, Iolande, and it would not be well that we should at all times read each other’s hearts. Are there not many things which you would keep from me?”

“None, sister, none. I dare tell you the most secret passages of my life; I

could confide in your judgment and kindness if I were in present difficulties."

"Thank you, dear friend, for your generous feeling and good opinion. I trust I should not abuse your confidence."

"But you will not let me do the same to you. Do you doubt me? Have you seen aught which leads you to mistrust me?"

"No, dear Iolande; why should you ask me? We have received you as one of ourselves to preserve your liberty of conscience and honour."

"Do not I know that?" replied the girl; "and have you not instructed me in God's Holy Word? Have you not explained to me the way of salvation? Oh, Ardoine, you have acted towards me like a sister, and I would fain be a sister to you in return."

"Such, Iolande, you shall be, although in position and knowledge you are superior to me."

"Ah, but you refrain from giving me

your confidence. Does friendship thrive on mysteries? Does affection triumph in divided souls? Is not transparency of heart the best gauge of love? Is not its unreserved interchange its noblest proof?"

"You talk, dear Iolande, as if you loved. Your language is what dear grandfather would call eloquent."

"Then it is because I *feel*. I love you, and would be one with you. You have not told me, Ardoine, what is on your heart. You know that I am a woman, and as such have the second sight with which women can read each other's feelings and motives. Now I am sure that there is a secret troubling your peace."

"Really, Iolande, you are so persevering, I suppose I must let you know something more, as you seem to suspect a mystery. Perhaps more than there is. Will you only concert with me what may be best to be done? Will you be true-hearted like a born sister?"

"I will, I will. I swear it by the Immaculate Virgin."

"Oh, Iolande! What! Do you swear by the Virgin? I neither need oaths where words are binding, nor dare I listen to such blasphemy as invoking the Virgin."

"Pardon me, pardon me; you have often told me to overcome this evil habit; but the force of education is strong, and the most wary trip sometimes. Let not this interrupt the interchange of a sister's confidence. You have bound me to secrecy. Do you require anything more?"

"Well, then, I may tell you that I accidentally met a stranger two or more evenings ago, and he informed me that preparations were making for a cruel and general massacre, which is to fall upon us before long like a thunderbolt."

"A massacre!—Oh, Ardoine! such a thing is impossible; somebody has been deceiving you; you surely could not believe such a monstrous calumny!"

“He who told me ought to know, and he had no motives for deceiving me.”

“Oh, you do not know the world; he must have had some interested motives of his own for telling you so base a scandal; it would be enough to brand the Church with eternal infamy.”

“Well, Iolande, you have only to look back to history, and I fear your Church has some sad precedents to imitate, as I learned from grandfather. There is the Bull of Innocent about two hundred years ago, which brought such havoc among our brethren in Dauphiny, and then even in our valleys only a hundred years since, look at what was done by the Comte de la Trinité.”

“Oh, Ardoine! is it kind of you to upbraid me in this manner with the deeds of our Church? I am sure you would not like these charges, or if I were to rake up history to blacken your sect; but I was never taught to do this.”

“Forgive me, Iolande, if I have hurt

your feelings. I thought that you saw these things in their true light, and that you admitted persecution for religion to be contrary to the Bible."

"But you know I was brought up from infancy in the Church of Rome, and that I may still have my prejudices when I hear her calumniated; I am sure this story of the massacre is a base and interested fabrication. Who was your authority?—who told you?" said Iolande, as her jealousy of Ardoine began to overcome her self-control, and vague suspicions shot through her mind.

"I was told it on good authority," replied Ardoine in a tone of sorrow, "and I have repeated what I heard; I fear it is too true, and it is for us to act upon the warning."

"But who is your informant?" demanded Iolande, with difficulty bridling her temper.

"I do not see that you have a right to require his name; it has nothing to do

with the fact itself, which the past makes more than probable."

"It has everything to do with it," answered Iolande, impatiently; "who is your informant?—I have a right to know, both to test your statement and also because my personal safety is concerned."

"I assure you, sister, my authority is trustworthy, and I believe him to be honest, and in a position to know the truth of the case."

"Ah, Ardoine, there is some mystery! I suspect there is something wrong; I always thought you were so guileless and inexperienced in the ways of the world; but, perhaps, like all our fashionables at Turin, you have got your lover, and that with all your professions you are not much better than they. I see it is a man, for you spake twice of 'him' and 'his name.'"

"Oh, how can you make such a wicked speech?" said Ardoine, bursting into tears.

"There, as you have sworn to keep the

whole affair secret, I will tell you. A young officer, by name Echard, in the Duke's service, gave me this information."

Iolande started when she heard the name; her undefined suspicions were rudely confirmed by certainty. Her jealousy of Ardoine rose even to hatred, and she now felt the impulse of personal feeling to be zealous in the Church's work of betraying the heretics. Ardoine had seen Echard, and he must have felt strongly towards her to endanger his prospects by giving such warning to a Vaudois girl. Iolande had loved Echard with the fervency of a young heart, and, unaccustomed to disappointment, she felt the throes of indignation at her own hopes being so suddenly assailed. She did not, however, forget the Marchioness's injunction, and determined to restrain herself, the more effectually to disconcert her rival's plans.

"Echard," said Iolande musingly, "I have heard the name; he is the son of the

Marquis of Pianesse; you must beware of him, for you are a peasant girl, and he has lived at the court. He must have had some evil motive to lead him out of his way to give this pretended advice to a Waldensian heretic."

"No, don't speak so unkindly of him," replied Ardoine warmly; "I am sure he is true; his noble face stamps him as one who would scorn deceit or cruelty; I could risk my life upon him."

"You seem to know him well," replied Iolande, with a tinge of bitterness; "but where have you met him? for you appear to be so very confidential. Ah, now I remember; he bore Gastaldo's edict to the farm; you made his acquaintance then, I suppose."

"No, I did not see him."

"Not see him! then how do you know anything of him?"

"It was afterwards, during the pillage of the farm when I first saw him. I was in great danger from the brutal soldiers; he

who was their officer rode up and generously saved me from death or a worse fate, and surely it would be wrong of me not to feel gratitude towards him, or to mistrust him for the future !”

A new light flashed upon Iolande as she muttered the words “when I first saw him.” Echard had not only seen Ardoine, but had rescued her, and such contact Iolande felt was full of peril to two young hearts.

“You must not, however, be too sure of him ; he knows the way of the court, and he knows how to flatter those who have any beauty ; his father is a severe and cruel man, and you know the proverb, ‘like father like son.’ You may rue it if you have faith in him. But you appear to have met him recently, when he gave you this information.”

“I met him two evenings ago by accident, when I went to my mother’s grave.”

“By accident ! I think that is very likely ; an officer of Savoy meeting a Vaudois

girl on a dark night by accident ! I suspect that he is your lover. Do you not love him ? Come, confess now."

"I never asked myself the question. I grant I feel a drawing towards him ; but then he is of a different creed, and I promised my mother on her death-bed that I would never wed a Roman Catholic."

"Yes, but where the heart's concerned, promises are like ropes of sand. I thought, dear Ardoine, that you loved Raynald. Poor Raynald, I am sure he loves you ; indeed, I confess I began to feel somewhat jealous when he could do nothing else but talk to me about you. He is a fine noble fellow—so tall and handsome ; and how his heart will grieve when he knows you do not love him, but love a stranger ! I should not wonder if he were to commit suicide. Ask yourself if you have never encouraged him ? Will it be right to neglect him, and risk your happiness with a stranger ?"

Ardoine sighed deeply, but made no

reply, and Iolande checked herself, fearing lest her feelings were getting the better of her discretion, which might arouse Ardoine's suspicions, and thus frustrate her intentions.

"Ah, well, Ardoine," said Iolande in a tone of assumed kindness, "tell me how many times you have already met Echard there?"

"Never before."

"What, never before? But I know once is not enough to thank him for such services. You said when you first saw him, you were going to meet him again. When is it?" Ardoine was silent. Iolande renewed her question.

"Since you have told me so much, sister, tell me when you meet next. Don't be afraid of my interrupting you, or coming to see you pressing hands, or hearing your sweet speeches. No, but dear Ardoine," said she, changing her manner, "tell me frankly, as a sister, when do you next meet?"

I may be useful to you both ; indeed, my own interest urges me to be your true friend."

"We were to meet to-morrow night again, at eight o'clock, after sunset."

"Where?"

"At the same place. Near the farm, on my dear mother's grave."

"But are you not afraid to go?"

"No, the lives of my friends are at stake. He did not know all the particulars, but will tell me more certainly what would happen, and name a place of refuge, where there may be no soldiers. He was a bearer of a despatch from the Marquis of Pianesse, and from what he had heard at Turin he feared it related to some cruel plot of this kind."

"But how can you tell that he is the one you are to meet?"

"Because we have a signal. His sword is to be placed in the ground near my hiding-place, so that I may know that all is safe."

"Sister," said Iolande, affectionately, "let me share your danger. I will come and escort you; and if you should have anything to say to this handsome young officer in private, why, you can give me a hint, and I can retire."

"Oh, Iolande! the times are too serious for jesting about such subjects. I have treated you as a sister, and trust you will treat me in the same way. Now, let us go in to see what kind offices we can render to the dear ones of our scattered family who are still here. O God! gather us together again, if it be thy will; if not, may we meet an unbroken family in heaven, where sorrows and sighing, separation and death, shall be banished for evermore!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONFESSIONAL.

IOLANDE was much perplexed after her conversation with Ardoine ; on the one hand, she was afraid of compromising Echard, for she loved him still ; and on the other, she was anxious to promote her own salvation by availing herself of such knowledge for the good of the Church. From time to time she had contrived to steal away to meet Malvicino, who was her confessor, to inform him of her success and to quiet her conscience by auricular confession, and his priestly absolution.

She had arranged to meet the Abbot that evening, but was undecided in what

way to shape her conduct. Her heart struggled between the guilt of perjury and the pleasure of gratifying her jealousy in the disappointment of her rival. She had not, however, much time for debate, for the hour had arrived when she was to meet the Abbot, whom she could hear pacing to and fro in the distance. "By Pope John XXIII., who maintained there was no life to come," muttered Malvicino, as he wrapped himself more closely in his Franciscan robes, "it's cold in this wood, without fleshly comfort. I wonder if the girl has got anything worth telling. I wish she wouldn't plague me so about confession and absolution; as for the first, it's lost its piquancy to me by this time; and as for the second, the Abbot, I suspect, wants it more than the girl. I hear a noise. I think she's coming. Health, my daughter; the Church grants thee her benediction by my unworthy mouth!"

"I thankfully accept, though I dare not

claim, the Holy Mother's favour," answered Iolande. "It is little that I can do among these self-confident heretics."

"You have found it difficult work then? By Popes Leo, Hadrian, and Clement, who could not crush the Wittemberg impostor, that is not to be wondered at. You see how long the Church herself has been in uprooting these *barbets*. But what news for our Holy Council *de Propagandâ*? Have you a candidate for baptism in your heretical sister?"

"Ardoine, do you mean?"

"Yes, from your account, I should much like to bring her into the true fold, and to convert her soul. When I saw her, I did not admire her beauty; she is not half so winning as the one who stands beside me; but the want of good looks should not interfere with her spiritual welfare."

"Father, is this your consistency? Do you not rave in the pulpit about women's vanity and dress, and tell us we count our

dimples in the glass seven times a day, instead of praying? And yet you would flatter me!"

"Judge not so harshly, daughter. But have you anything to confess? any sins to blot out? any good deeds to place to your credit? anything to win the approval of your uncle the Marquis, who is now at La Tour?"

"I think," said Iolande, with hesitation, "that I have a clue to something that will bring forth fruit."

"Let me hear it, in the name of our model Pope Alexander VI."

"But, Father, I had to swear by the Holy Virgin, that I would keep it secret, and now I am violating my conscience."

"It's only to your spiritual father, and it's in the way of confession. The Virgin will not deal hardly with you; but to make you happy I will absolve you at once. By Pope Clement VII., who absolved Cellini from the blood of Bourbon, kneel down, and we will free you from the fault."

Iolande then knelt down before the Franciscan, who made the sign of the cross over her, and said—

“A Vinculis peccatorum nostrorum absolvat nos omnipotens et misericors Dominus.”

“Now, daughter, go on with your statement.”

Iolande hesitated a moment, for her love prompted her to conceal the name of Echard, or if possible to secure him from danger.

“Father, you have given me absolution, but can you give it to others who are concerned in the matter, except the heretics?”

“To be sure I can. Wasn’t the absolution in the plural? by all the Popes in purgatory, and by all the Dominicans in hell,” said the Franciscan, crossing himself, “we’d absolve them all if the Church were only paid for it.”

“Then you will absolve all save the heretics.”

"I will, my daughter, as truly as I should like to wed my lips to yours."

A look of indignation flashed from Iolande's eye, as she said, in an angry tone, "Don't presume on your own absolution, Holy Father, or I shall rebel."

"By the beard of the warrior Julius, a right-minded girl; I said it to test you, and I see you are true at heart. Go on, daughter, I am all attention to hear your words."

"I have discovered," proceeded Iolande, in a gloomy tone, "that the young girl Ardoine is to meet some one to-morrow night—who do you think it is?"

"Nay, don't play the coquette by keeping an old man guessing; my day for conundrums is gone by."

"She is to meet my cousin Echard."

"Ah," ejaculated the Abbot, as he listened attentively, "I hope there's no treachery in the camp. I owe him a private grudge, especially when I think of

the 28th of January. Ah, meeting her again !”

“It appears,” continued Iolande, “that he met this girl at La Baudène, and warned her of a contemplated massacre on the 24th.”

“Shin of St. Cyprian,” cried out the Abbot, “how did he know of such a thing ? Ah, I see, he was on duty when the Council sat. Oh, you skulking viper, we’ll tear your fangs out before you’re ten days older. What more, good daughter ?”

“He told her of the massacre, and he has an appointment with her to-morrow at the same place, when he will give her further particulars.”

“The Virgin hath blinded his eyes that he sees not *ut non cernit*. Give me the particulars. You have well earned your own salvation.”

“They are to meet to-morrow ; she will be hidden thereabouts, and his sword is to be placed in a mound there, as the signal that he has come, and that all is safe.”

"The Virgin hath blessed thy pious efforts. He may sleep with his right eye open to-night, but we'll change his commission and draft him into Satan's body-guard."

"Oh, but you said you would absolve him and not injure him. After all he's a friend of mine."

"For your sake then we will absolve him, as soon as he has confessed."

"Father," continued Iolande, "my conscience reproaches me for having broken my oath."

"Daughter, these are your woman's fears. The end and intentions are everything; the means are only to reach the end; the result is God's glory the support of the Church, your salvation and his salvation. What glorious ends! and if the means have done violence to your conscience, your own self-conquest is more meritorious. Besides I have given you absolution. Go on, my daughter, I shall

make good use of your information ; keep still on the watch, and let me know if there be aught to forward the interests of the Church."

"Fortune favours me," said the Abbot to himself, after they separated; "I changed my tutelary relic to-day. There is more virtue in the shin of St. Cyprian than in the vertebræ of St. Agatha. One was a man, and therefore it's likely. But I shall kill two birds with one stone—I shall capture a companion for life, and ruin my truant disciple, and rival, as it appears, at my pleasure. I must get hold of that sword somehow. The time seems to have come for me to let Pianesse know about Dagot's death, and what took place in January at La Baudène."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARREST.

THE Marquis Pianesse had taken up his quarters at the Convent of La Tour, where he was organizing his plans for carrying out the intentions of the *Consilium de Propagandâ Fide, et extirpandis Hæreticis*. He was seated in a large spacious apartment which was assigned for his use, and before him stood Echard, who had been summoned to his presence.

“Echard,” said the Marquis deliberately, as he fixed his eyes steadily on the young man, “how has the cause of the Church prospered in your hands? We have conferred much honour on you in confiding to

you special duties in this holy crusade. You remember the dying wish of your mother the Marchioness, and also the resolutions of the Holy Council of the Propaganda; we are about to carry them into good effect. Are you not burning for an opportunity of distinguishing yourself in the ranks of the Church Militant?"

"I am at your orders, my lord," replied Echard, with some hesitation.

"At my orders! Is your devotion for the Church's cause quickened only in obedience to my orders? This does not argue much zeal on your part. You remember the consolation the Marchioness derived on her death-bed from the prospect of the extirpation of heresy in these long-polluted valleys?"

"By what means do you propose to convert them, my lord?"

"By what means? By those which heretics best understand—by appealing to what they call the carnal man — by the

sword. If the doctrines of the priests and the weapons of the pulpit can't succeed, it is for the soldier of the cross to grasp his sword in order to lead the recusant into the fold."

"Excuse my freedom, my Lord, but I should think that the appeal to the sword is but a poor substitute for argument. When brute force supersedes persuasion, it is the evidence of a weak cause. Why can we not conquer the heretics by disputation? Do we not both appeal ultimately to the same standard of faith and practice?"

"How now," answered the Marquis, angrily; "do you dare to address me thus? If these are your sentiments, I had better set the Inquisition to work at home before seeking for converts abroad."

"I only meant that persecution appears hostile to the spirit of the Christian religion, as seen in the character and death of our Great Master."

"So you're a theologian and a contro-

versialist. Then I fear you've been imbibing poison instead of zeal by beholding our *autos da fê*. I sent you as a good Catholic to uproot heresy, and they are sending me a heretic back. I thought you were steadfast in the faith, and was loth to credit any reports against you. But I now see the cloven foot. I hear that in January when sent for the enforcement of Gastaldo's edict, you gave assistance to a heretic family, and actually slew one of the soldiers of the cross with your sword. I have just heard this from the Marchioness's confessor, but thought it was a calumny. Dagot, that was the man's name. Perhaps it was true? Was it?"

"I did what common humanity bade me in the protection of female virtue. I only did what you would have done, had your daughter been in danger."

"Humanity! do you speak of humanity when religion calls us to the work of salvation? I abjure your half-heartedness. You

are a traitor and a heretic yourself. I disown you. But there is not much necessity now for that, for you are no son of mine."

"No son of yours!" replied Echard, trembling violently. "I do not understand you; I have always regarded the late Marchioness as my mother, notwithstanding the want of that unknown sweetness which nature sheds abroad in a true mother's heart."

"Insult not the dead, or I shall refrain no longer. You never belonged to me, and she was not your mother. And now—to be rewarded thus for all the posts and honours I've heaped on you! You are a heretic at heart, sir, and not a Catholic."

"I am grieved, my Lord, to differ with you. I would not offend you willingly, for many ties and obligations bind me to you."


"Ties and obligations! and how have you requited them? But it is necessary that Pianesse should keep himself free from all taint of heresy, and I disown you, though, as I told you, you were never a son of mine."

Your low blood shows its origin, despite your education and advantages. There is no stain of heresy in our lineage, nor on our escutcheon. I fear my wife has nursed a serpent in her bosom. You had better reconsider your *Credo*, or we will award you the punishment of an apostate. I understand, also, that there is some mystery about the heretic entrusted to your keeping, who has escaped. You shall enter her cell yourself, and I will place a more careful sentry over you. Ho! guards, disarm the prisoner, and remove him to the dungeon until further orders."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRYSTING PLACE.


THE shadows of evening on the first day in Holy Week were deepening rapidly, and melting the various features of the landscape into one indistinct mass, when a young female descended from the Colette on the side of Rora, and secreted herself among the brushwood which edged the Pelice. From time to time she crept cautiously along, as if anxious to escape observation; but a look of calm courage was visible in her countenance, as if some overpowering motive were leading her to brave the perils which beset her path. Ardoine's heart beat violently as she approached the familiar




but deserted farm of La Baudène. For a moment she paused, and with outstretched neck and half-opened mouth listened to every sound, a model for the classic chisel of Praxiteles. She drew near the appointed place of meeting, but there was no one there, and her eye could dimly trace the mound which marked her mother's grave. No danger could check the rush of feeling with which that realization convulsed her heart, and the silent scalding tears chased each other down her cheeks. After some time she thought that she saw in the distance the figure of a young man, clad in what appeared to be the uniform of a Piedmontese officer. She approached nearer to the grave. Her eyes had become more accustomed to the light, and she perceived an object on the mound, which at the first sight she had overlooked. It glittered at the top, and beneath there appeared a ray of filmy light. She recognized the appointed signal. It was the sword of Echard. Venturing

forth from her retreat, she advanced and knelt upon the grave, and, grasping with her hand the jewelled hilt of the sword, bent forward as if lost in bitter reflections. How much was there to harrow a daughter's heart! Her mother lay beneath. She stood upon the site of her cherished home now in ruins, and desecrated from time to time by the Irish outlaws. Her family were scattered and impoverished, and some of the little ones had perished from want and exposure. Her thoughts then reverted to Echard, the recollection of whom inspired her with such strong yet undefined emotions. The idea of his presence nerved her with courage; he could not be far off, for the concerted signal was on her mother's grave.

The thoughts which we have narrated flashed through her soul with that instantaneous combination which is one of the most glorious attributes of the mind, so that Ardoine knelt on the grave only for a



moment in point of time. She was enjoying the reverie of unbidden love for an instant, when the heart had forgotten the sorrow of the present in the fairy dreams of a more propitious future. But her blissful visions were rudely dispelled. A thick short-set man, with black hair and beard, clothed in the robe of a Franciscan, rushed out from the adjoining copse. The terrified girl sank motionless on her mother's grave, as she heard a fierce voice exclaiming, "By the seven Popes who cursed all who maintained that the Franciscans had property, don't be afraid. Your lover was on guard to-night; and he asked me to take his place. Ah," said he to himself, as he gazed at her face in the dusk of twilight, "it's the first fair look I've had at her; and by Pope John XXII., who cursed the other seven Popes, she has got a pretty face. Now don't struggle and scream. I shall do you no harm. If you listen to my arguments you need fear nothing. All will be well



when you become a daughter of the true Church."

"Oh, help, help!" screamed Ardoine. "Is there no one to save me? Oh, mother, let me perish on thy grave! Thou art happy, because thy soul is in heaven, and thou knowest not what befalls thy miserable orphan."

"Hush! Don't scream. Here, Villalmin, help me with the girl, or she'll struggle out of my hands."

"Oh, madness!" exclaimed Ardoine, "to trust in a stranger. I would have risked my life on his honour. Iolande was right. Oh, save me! Is there none to help?"

"Don't cry; all will be well. How do you think an officer and the son of the Marquis could come to you? His conscience smote him for having dealings with a heretic, and he confessed it to me, and said that I must keep his appointment, and try to convert you. You were to have met

Echard here, and the sword was your signal; so you see that he has fully explained all your arrangements."

Ardoine, however, did not succumb without a struggle. She screamed for help, but the rude gusts of wind were nature's only answer to her supplications. At length her strength began to fail, and her voice grew fainter.

Throwing down the sword the Abbot grasped Ardoine with both his arms, and summoning one of his mercenaries to his assistance, secured her beyond the possibility of escape. The darkness favoured his return to La Tour. Transporting his prisoner thither he secreted her in a dungeon, until circumstances might enable him to prosecute his plans.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RAYNALD AND IOLANDE.

RAYNALD having heard of the approach of the Marquis of Pianesse, had left Villar to act in concert with his father, Janavel, who for some time past had been disciplining a few peasants in defence of the valleys. He returned to Villar early in the week, in order to make arrangements for the removal of the remnant, when, to his surprise, he found that they had been obliged suddenly to disperse, owing to the incursions of the soldiers.

Iolande and one or two of the children had secreted themselves in the neighbourhood, hoping to escape the insults of the

murdering bandits and the Piedmontese and Irish outlaws.

Rodolphe, he learned, had gone to Castelluzzo, and his aunts, Renée and Lucille, with the greater part of the children, to the upland village of Rora.

“Raynald,” said Iolande, addressing him as soon as she recognized him, “I am very glad you have returned. I am so anxious about your cousin Ardoine. I fear that some misfortune has overtaken her.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Iolande, what do you mean? What misfortune has happened? What makes you think so?”

“I cannot tell, but she has been absent some time now. I have accidentally learned that she had an appointment with an officer, the Marquis of Pianesse’s son, and since then she has not been heard of.”

“What do you mean? Speak again. An appointment! Officer? Ardoine? My brain is in a whirl.”

“I am sure you will feel the blow

acutely," replied Iolande, "because we all know your kindness and devotion to her, although she did not appear to value it much. I often wondered at her negligence of you, and felt vexed myself when I saw how grieved you were in heart."

"Cease these remarks," replied Raynald, abruptly, "nor trifle with a wounded spirit. Tell me all you know about my cousin."

"What I know I have learned from her own lips. She was to meet the son of the Marquis of Pianesse, near the farm of La Baudène. In vain did I represent the danger of such a proceeding, for she was determined to go."

"Who is the officer?" exclaimed Raynald, passionately. "Is his name Echard?"

"Now that you remind me that is his name. I wonder how I forgot it, for she repeated it over so often, and with such an emphasis, that I cannot but think she loves him."

Raynald bowed his head, and the giant

frame of the mountaineer trembled like the quivering aspen beneath the northern blast, under the tumult of his heart's agony. His cheek grew pale, the moisture stood in drops upon his brow, and he caught hold of Iolande to prevent himself from falling.

"It would appear," continued Iolande, "that she has met him several times. Did he not take Gastaldo's edict to your farm on the 25th of January?"

Raynald groaned in spirit, but made no reply.

"Perhaps she saw him then, and he was smitten with her. They met again, I understand, at the wreck of the farm, and I doubt not did not lose any opportunity; indeed she told me she owed him a debt of gratitude for what he did there, for he was her protector and deliverer; but one would think there must be some foul play, for it would be extraordinary that an officer of such a position should seek a heretic peasant girl with honourable purposes."

Raynald gnashed his teeth with rage and disappointment. "Ah, why did I not run him through with his own sword when I had the opportunity? I saw him on his knees to her. O Lord, forgive me if in my erring nature I harbour thoughts of revenge; but I feel as if I must shed blood. Oh, my beloved cousin, you may be in the hands of a betrayer! You may be a prisoner in the convent! You must have been deceived by him! I feel sure you are innocent! You are guileless! Perhaps you thought you could benefit your friends. Ardoine, Ardoine, I may never see you again. Oh that I had been one of the three killed last night at the barricade!"

"They have met before," continued Iolande, "at the same place. He was coming from Turin a few days ago, and they had a long conversation near her mother's grave, for she told me some of the particulars, and they agreed to meet again last night."

"Oh, cousin, what can I think? I must acquit you. He is a deceiver; but that is nothing new to those who wear Rome's livery. Ah, my cousin, for your love I would have dared anything! Have I lost it for ever? Shall I see you no more? Your smile haunts me. Oh, I cannot think of it! Would that I had been there! Revenge! If I could meet him and strip off his uniform he should then feel if not a lover's yet a brother's vengeance. How do you know all these circumstances? You may be deceived," exclaimed Raynald, looking Iolande sternly in the face.

"I learned them from herself," replied Iolande. "I could not have learned all these particulars from any one else. She was to go to the grave again. I could not prevent her, and she would not allow me to go with her. You seem almost to doubt me. Let us hasten to the place, and see if we can find any confirmation or any signs of a struggle. His sword was to be driven into

the ground as a signal. Let us go and see ; I shall not be afraid to go with you."

"Let us hasten there, Iolande. Oh that I had been earlier ! I would have rescued thee, Ardoine ; yea, at the sacrifice of my life ! Little did I think, when meditating on thee by day and night, my cousin, that thou wast in such danger. What is life in comparison with the happiness of those we love ? The thought of thy danger would have nerved me to brave an army. Oh that heaven may shield thee from the treacherous myrmidons of the Church of Rome. Quick, Iolande ; let us hasten to the place."

Before long Raynald and Iolande reached La Baudène. They searched about the cypress tree, groping on the grave mound with their hands in the darkness.

"Oh, Raynald, here is something which feels like the fragments of a dress. And here is the shred of a handkerchief, which looks like Ardoine's. There, hold it up to the moonlight."

Raynald did so, and grasped it convulsively.


“I feel something else—here is a piece of an officer’s epaulette. There must have been a struggle. There may be something more. Oh, it is too true! My sister, thou art betrayed!”

Raynald searched about in silent agony until he discerned something glittering. He stretched out his hand and pulled it out of the tangled brushwood in which it was half buried. At the first touch he felt that it was a sword. His fears are realized. There is that jewelled handle, proving it to be that of the officer Echard, who had worn it at the announcement of Gastaldo’s edict. It was, indeed, the sad confirmation of Iolande’s words. There had evidently been a struggle, and the sword must have been dropped or forgotten in the encounter. Vainly hoping to disprove his conjectures, he held it up in the clouded moonlight; but after a moment’s inspection he dashed

it to the ground, when he recognized it as the one which he had picked up in Aunt Marie's room. Twice had he seen it before. Without doubt it was Echard's sword. His previous sorrow rose into mad frenzy, and he accused Ardoine of being faithless and false. There was a plot. The two had conspired together. Then as his rage abated, his affection regained its sway, and he absolved Ardoine. There were marks of a struggle, and she might have been deceived in some inexplicable manner. Circumstances were often difficult to reconcile, but Ardoine must be guiltless. He had known her all her life, and her religion would lead her to prefer death to dishonour. But as for Echard he knew him not. He knew the treachery of Rome's servants, who were often wolves in sheep's clothing, and he remembered his tones of menace when he delivered Gastaldo's edict, and his attitude in Aunt Marie's chamber. Ardoine had been decoyed away, and he should see

her no more ! That love which was the star of his life, and which still seemed to survive the desolation of home, had sunk in the blackness of night, and his beloved might perish in the dungeon, the victim of some profligate noble. The stalwart mountaineer was convulsed with agony as he stooped to pick up the sword. In his grief he remembered her on whose grave he knelt, and his first communion in her sick chamber. He wished in his bitterness that he were entombed with her in the friendly earth. Alas ! perhaps the sanctity of the tomb had been outraged, and a betrayer might have trampled on the mother's ashes, in his vile abduction of the weeping daughter. The ruins of his father's home were before him, and when he reviewed the beloved members of that circle who had perished or disappeared, his heart felt the poignancy of an orphan's grief. He rose up from his knees, and then knelt once more on the grave, while the fatal sword dropped from

his hand and fell athwart the tomb. He could have breathed a vow of vengeance, but he restrained himself. Let him not defile the silence of the grave with human passion, for he remembered that it was written, "Vengeance is mine : I will repay, saith the Lord." He believed that Christ his Saviour was looking at him, pointing him to Calvary, and bidding him follow the example his Master left when He expired on the cross. Raynald then became more composed, though the sight of the sword which he carried away excited an occasional outburst of anger and grief.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE SUITOR.

THE minds of men have many arbitrary languages, varied in their vocal utterances or pictured hieroglyphics, which have made our race more sectional since it disputed under the shadows of Babel; the hearts of men have but one, taught them by Nature—the language of emotion. This welds humanity together, and establishes a Freemasonry between the dwarfs of the Arctic Circle and those of Tierra del Fuego, between the crouching slave of Africa and the proud Caucasian.

It is thus that the present is able to interpret the past. The toga of the Ro-

man, the corslet of the soldier, the cassock of the priest, the kirtle of the mediæval maiden, differed as the customs of the times, but they covered hearts whose passions moved according to the same laws.

The plagues of Athens, Constantinople, Florence, and Milan, have produced like phenomena in different times; the political error of Rehoboam has been repeated in gross and in miniature; nations have gone through political phases, from the licence of the mob to the iron heel of the despot, according to unerring law; Xerxes has his folly reproduced in the present day on a national scale; and all this because the passions of the heart are changeless.

It is this truth which has made Shakspeare the child of Nature, and his works the heritage of no special section of mankind, but of the human race.

Ardoine was at first paralyzed by her unforeseen calamities, for she was more susceptible to sorrow from her guileless-


ness and her intensity of feeling, the privilege, and therefore sometimes the misfortune, of youth.

The heart is full of contrasts; she beheld the bright visions of the family circle at La Baudène, floating on the horizon of the past, with greater anguish from the experience of present misery.

As is the joy, such is the sorrow; as is the good, such is the evil; even as the height of the mountains is supposed to correspond with the depths of the ocean.

The remembrance of her ruined home and of her exiled friends, some of whom might possibly have perished, might well crush her spirit with feelings of unutterable sorrow. Amidst her griefs her heart, yearning for human sympathy and for the sense of protection, involuntarily turned to him whose image had been absorbing her soul. But this topic was one of aggravation; she had cherished hopes of his conversion and of his faithfulness; they

were now merged in despair. He had betrayed her, and must have been a party to the cruel ambush by which she had been entrapped. She would repudiate his name and erase his memory. Again her heart pleaded, for he had rescued her once, and approached her with the delicacy and respect of love. She trembled as she asked herself whether he loved her, and she dared not analyze her own feelings towards him whose unbidden image dwelt in her heart, and whose name hovered on her lips. Why was he not there? If he had deceived her——the thought was intolerable. He might himself have been betrayed and taken prisoner, for in giving her that warning he had told her of the danger to which he exposed himself. There must be an explanation; she would cherish the thought, though she might never live to hear it from his lips on earth; but why interrogate her feelings, for he belonged to that Church which she was pledged to



abjure, and a member of which she could not wed.

“Oh, my mother!” exclaimed Ardoine, with an outburst of grief, “I have wept over your death-bed, I have knelt on your grave, and now your orphan will perish. I shall soon join you. Father of heaven, save my soul, and for Christ’s sake forgive my past sins. I pray for *him*; the heart can speak to its God. Save him, and bring him to the knowledge of the truth. Thou art all-powerful; I dare not distrust Thee even here, for the gates of brass can open of their own accord at Thy Word. I will remember the sweet words of my mother and grandfather. Oh, my little ones, who have escaped to Rora, you will not forget to pray for your Ardoine.”

She was disturbed in her reflections by the sudden entrance of the Abbot, whom she recognized as her captor.

“Daughter,” said Malvicino, speaking with the honeyed smoothness of the eccle-

siastic, "I have come to administer spiritual consolation to your bruised spirit. Tell me your grief, my child, and I will lead you to the bosom of the Virgin."

"God is my comforter," replied Ardoine faintly; "you have made my griefs more bitter than before."

"I, daughter! by Pope Alexander's sons, Gandia and the fratricide Valentine, I am your friend; that officer plotted to ruin you, and I interposed to save you."

"Who would ruin me? I do not understand your meaning."

"Echard, the bearer of Gastaldo's edict. He is a traitor to his sovereign and to woman; he would have carried you off. But now you are under my care, and I will instruct you in our holy faith, and then you will be happy."

"Oh, I don't believe it!" replied Ardoine, wringing her hands. "Echard, wast thou false? No, *you* must be the traitor!"

"Daughter, you know not the world;

you have allowed your heart to plead for the wretch whom you should hate. But let me teach you to say an *Ave Maria*, and how to cross yourself; and when you are a good Catholic you shall then have everything that you can desire."

"I am not a Catholic, and never can be! Release me from this dreadful dungeon, or else leave me. Oh, Echard! if I perish, I perish."

"By the Pope's triple crown, I am so glad that knave did not meet you. But you may trust me; don't you think so? You shall not stay long in this cold place. Perdition take the Council of Placentia and their decree about celibacy," said Malvicino to himself, "but, so far as practice goes, it's worse than a dead letter. The Vicars of Christ don't seem to care much for it in practice, so I don't see why a holy Franciscan should. Although she is a heretic, and a rebellious one, she is really beautiful. Don't be afraid of me," con-

tinued Malvicino aloud ; “ you have only to try to please me, and you shall be happy. I have a little cottage on the Adige ; you must make that your home if I release you.”

The blush of the maiden mantled her cheek, as she looked with the fearlessness of innocence into the repulsive face of the Franciscan.

“ Come and dwell with me !” said Malvicino, in a cajoling tone. “ You shall be my wife !”

“ Are you a Roman Catholic priest ?” answered Ardoine, in a tone of indignation ; “ and dare you talk thus to a heretic ?”

“ A dispensation from Rome, *amore*, will arrange everything. A blessing on Pope Leo III., who invented indulgences. That’s a blessed bit of parchment, signed and sealed by the Pope, which can unload a heavy conscience. My love will not hurt you,” continued the Abbot, falling on his knees. I will do all I can to make you happy ; you shall be mistress of all

I possess, if you will only always keep a smile on those bright eyes."

"Avaunt, base hypocrite!" cried Ardoine, retreating into the corner of the dungeon. "God of the orphan and the widow protect me!"

"Ardoine, I love you! I will abjure my priestly robes to win your heart."

"I will embrace death first!" replied the girl.

"Oh, let me not urge my suit in vain; I am ready to sacrifice all my hopes of future preferment for your sake."

"Wretched man, can you thus break the oaths which bind you? I reject your offers, and will denounce your wicked conduct."

"Nay, then," said the Abbot, rising from his knees, "if I can't win you by fair means, I will try another method. Know that I have only to speak to the Council of your heresy, and you will be condemned to the torture."

"I will be true to my faith, God helping me, and say, Welcome torture rather than disgrace."

"Nay, be mine, and you need not fear; but if you will not hear reason, I shall not interpose to save you from the Church's vengeance. Bethink you of what I have said, or by the Pope's toe, which I once kissed, I will place you on the rack, and see if that will not bring you to your senses, as regards faith and love. My threats are not in vain, so I shall leave you here for a while to reflect on the alternatives."

"I will prepare myself for death," said Ardoine. "I feel that the presence of God, and purity of conscience are sweeter than bodily ease. Wretched man! you insult that very crucifix which has heard your words. I feel sure that Echard has not deceived me; your conduct assures me of it. I will die with this consolation at least; you have played him false. O God, if we should both be called to suffer, we

shall meet above, and then be parted no more."

"I could not," said the Abbot to himself, as he passed out of the door, "I could not break that fair form. I hope she will not be obstinate. I must purge her from her heresy, and win her heart. I would test her; and by the two right arms of John the Baptist at Genoa and Malta, she has a brave heart, and is one worthy of Malvicino, Confessor to the Marchioness, and an Abbot of the order of St. Francis."

his thoughts abruptly changed under his complicated grief. "Not his son! not her son! who and what am I? Does a stain blight my birth, as well as heresy my character? Ah! Rome, I have heard of the cruel absolution thou dost give to the suspected. Perhaps I shall feel the unutterable agony of those instruments which I have so often passed as a careless observer. Suffering! it is thou who makest us feel for others when we have felt ourselves. No, the very thought, whilst it makes me shudder for myself, makes me abhor the cursed instrumentality the more when employed against others."

In this dark hour Echard felt the relief of having the praise, and not the condemnation, of conscience. He was a prisoner because of his humanity; he had rescued a helpless girl from a fate which the untutored savage might abhor as infamous, and which it should therefore shame the Christianity of Rome to inflict. He needed

no clue to dwell upon a subject which was involuntarily ever present with his heart. He leaned his head against the damp wall, and closing his eyes saw in imagination that maiden's face; he heard the accents of her voice, he caught the winning expression of her smile, he repeated her words, and dwelt on the thousand nameless nothings which the memory of the lover retains and exaggerates. In his reverie a gleam of pleasure lightens his soul: it is but for a moment; he opens his eyes; the present is forced on him; he is alone—disowned—a captive in a dungeon—death his probable fate. At the first thought of Ardoine a blush had dyed his cheek in that dark prison; but even she was another source of bitterness to him in this hour of misery. Did she love him? He had heard from that victim on the rack that Raynald loved her. But she might not return it. He thought that she had said, when last they met, that she loved him as a brother. Alas! he was

to meet her that night. He might have been betrayed, and she might be captured. Oh, agony! he did not remember that he had entrusted the secret to any one. Malvicino must have told the Marquis about Dagot's death, and he might have set a trap to capture Ardoine if he had discovered their proposed interview. Ardoine would think him a perjured deceiver, and would erase his memory from her heart if it lingered there at all! She would look upon it all as a Papal *ruse* to ensnare a heretic. She might be now on her mother's grave waiting for him. Ah! if she were taken. Those golden tresses might be cut off by some base galley slave; that cheek might become haggard from want; those graceful limbs might be crippled for life; that form of symmetry might be broken on the wheel, or perish in the loathsome dungeon; or, worse still, she might be cast into the convent, to subserve the passions of some cowed hypocrite.

These were fearful suppositions, but his experience told him they were not only possible, but probable. For himself he could have dared martyrdom, and could have embraced the stake for one smile from those eyes of light; but the dread that he might be her unintentional executioner was a refinement of poignant misery that might have satisfied the invention of Dominic in his yearnings for the salvation of heretics.

At this moment a sound is heard: it is the clock of the convent; he counts its strokes; it is the very hour when he should have met her. His worst fears may now be realized. Wild with these thoughts he rushed up and down his dark dungeon in a state bordering on distraction, and then throwing himself on the floor with clasped hands, lay without signs of life, save an occasional tremor or groan.

Then a pause: nothing was heard save

the swaying and clinking of an iron chain fastened to a ring in one side of the dungeon, which in his frenzy he had tried to wrench from the wall for the purpose of suicide. But as his hand rests against the stone it becomes sensible of an indentation in the form of a letter; there are several words, which form a line; it may be the legacy of some suffering predecessor, perhaps of her whom he had released from that very cell. Beginning from one end to trace with his finger the characters, he deciphered the sentence, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Underneath, in smaller and more irregular characters, was another half-finished line, "Fear not them that kill the body; but fear Him who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea——" Here it ceased. The captive traced and retraced these precious characters, which sounded like a voice from heaven, and spoke comfort to his benighted heart. When human


consolation was hopeless, he felt that God had drawn near.

After repeating the sentences aloud, he fell on his knees. "O God of heaven," cried he, "I will cast myself upon Thee and upon Thy Son. This is Thy Word. O Christ, let me know what truth is; let my sins be washed away in Thy precious blood, of which I have but lately heard." Soothed by these reflections, and jaded with his mental conflict, Echard laid his head on a stone seat in the corner of the dungeon, while he sought the medicine of nature, the prerogative of youth, earth's last kind gift to the malefactor—sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FRANCISCAN ABBOT.

OUR scene leads us into an apartment which has already been presented to the reader. It is a low, vaulted underground chamber in the convent of La Tour, far removed from all contact with the outer world. Various iron instruments hang on the wall, in one of which a human nail is grasped as in a vice. The wooden framework, with its machinery which the workmen had arranged for the execution of Marguerite occupies the centre, and still preserves the stains of her blood. Tied to this was a beautiful girl in the bloom of youth, whose golden tresses hung back-



wards, and trailed upon the pavement. Her hands and feet were bound to the machine by cords which were in contact with its rollers and handles. A man of severe aspect, with a shock of black hair and black beard, in the garb of a Franciscan, leaned over her with an expression of gloating passion, while in the corner a ruffian-looking attendant snored with his arms folded.

Malvicino had had another interview with Ardoine; but, finding her more than ever hostile to his wicked purposes, determined to try the effect of the menace he had held out. Aided by Villalmin, one of those villains who were in the pay of the Abbey of Pignerol, and accustomed to deeds of blood or intrigue, he had carried her to the torture-room, and fastened her on the rack.

“Come, my loved one,” said the Abbot, “will you not repent?—let me purge you from your heresy; there, I will take the

gag from your mouth for a moment to hear your recantation."

So saying, he removed a small piece of wood from between Ardoine's teeth.

"Come, now repent. There, you can hear the cord tightening; quick, or I'll wake my friend; it's the work he likes; oh, let me win you! There, I'll unloose your hand. Now, lift it up to show that you will come and live with me, and then I'll take you off. Perverse still! look, you can see these specks of blood on the woodwork. There was a woman racked here a few days ago; she was one of your people—she had black hair, and came from La Baudène. She gave way at last, and was baptized, but her obstinacy made her hold out too long."

Ardoine closed her eyes that she might not behold her persecutor; and, weak from exhaustion, faintly articulated, "Death! death!—my Saviour!"

"So you won't! but you must not tax my

forbearance too long, or I'll move the winch. Now, come; I do not want to hurt these delicate arms."

"I wish," growled Malvicino aside, "I had the Dominican and his original sin here, I would turn until he confessed the Virgin was Immaculate. I'm losing my time," continued he aloud, somewhat angrily; "I may get surprised. Consent that you will be mine, and we will fly to-night, and all the golden ducats which I have secreted shall be yours."

"Never! never!" whispered the prisoner; "Death! death!"

"Then by Pope Nicholas III., the patron of the Franciscans!" said Malvicino to himself, "I'll really tighten the ropes and frighten her, or shall I try the effect of cajolery and argument again? By Pope Alexander III. and his stirrup! I hear steps and voices in the passage. I shall be surprised, and what explanation can I give? Quick," said he, putting the gag

into Ardoine's mouth, tying down her hand again and pushing her escaped tresses under her head. He had hardly time to throw a cloth over her before the door opened, and the Marquis of Pianesse, accompanied by several persons, entered.

CHAPTER XXII.

PLACIDO CORSO.

EDWARD was left to his uninterrupted reveries for many hours, which rolled over in sad monotony, broken only by the convent chimes. Once he had heard the movement of feet in the passage, as of two men who appeared to be carrying something in the direction of the Chamber of the Inquisition. At length the door opened, and the Marquis entered the cell, accompanied by the Archbishop, De la Mèna, and Placido Corso.

“My Lord,” said the Marquis, to the Archbishop, in an undertone, “this is the young man who was sent to enforce the order of Gastaldo, of whom I was speak-

ing to you. He was, as you know, a godson of the Marchioness, and at her request I have entrusted to him various responsible posts in which he could have displayed his zeal for the extirpation of heresy. He has had every advantage, but he has betrayed my confidence. He connived at the escape of the enemies of the Church, and killed a soldier who was converting a heretic."

"Marquis," replied Placido Corso, "youth is impetuous, and must not be judged too rigidly. I should intreat you to be lenient. You have many associations with him. He was dear to the Marchioness, your wife of blessed memory. Let our Right Reverend Father in God lay upon him a penance which shall absolve him, and then let him be sent from these scenes of temptation."

"My conscience prompts me to use harsh measures," said the Marquis; "for he was sent on a mission to Rome, and

since January last I have selected him for the most active posts of duty in these valleys connected with our Holy Crusade. The Marchioness, in her zeal for his salvation, or it might be from doubts as to his sound-heartedness, desired me to place him in the forefront rank of the defenders of the Church."

"Not so, my Lord," replied Placido Corso; "let justice be tempered with mercy. He is young, and may have erred from impulse rather than design."

"Our brother is right," interposed the Archbishop; "sparing the life of a heretic might end in their salvation, and would add another member to the Holy Roman Church. The soldier's zeal must have outstripped his wisdom, from what I heard of the affair; and such acts bring disgrace on the Church, my Lord. I think a slight penance will meet the case. Let him lick the sign of the cross lengthways over the floor of the chamber of the Holy Office

in our presence, and repeat forty *Paters*, thirty *Aves*, and the Penitential Psalms every day for six months."

"Archbishop," said the Marquis, "your advice, true to your office, leans to the side of charity. I will not oppose you. For my own sake I ought not to proclaim what would be considered a family scandal. Echard," continued Pianesse, addressing the prisoner, "you have had advantages—you have been educated by the late Marchioness, who desired your salvation with the greatest ardour. You have been to Rome, and seen our Holy Father, the source of all holiness, the vicar of Christ's Church on earth. You have been advanced to an honourable office here, and yet you have tampered with the accursed thing."

"I cannot say that I have acted from hostility to the Church. I did but follow the instinct of humanity."

"Talk not of humanity, young man," interrupted De la Mèna, "when souls are

at stake ; cruelties to the body are often the greatest charities to the souls of heretics."

"But I presume," continued Echard, "that our religion does not sanction the outrage and pillage of ruffians, as means of drawing followers round the cross."

"My Lord," whispered De la Mèna, "I fear your penance is too light. He is disposed to argue in favour of heresy, and not to place his conscience humbly at the disposal of the Church."

"Let us adjourn to the appointed chamber, holy Confessors," said the Marquis, "and witness our penitent carry out the mild sentence of our charitable Archbishop."

So saying they went to the chamber of the Inquisition, in which Malvicino was deeply engaged.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHAMBER OF THE INQUISITION.

“How now, holy confessor,” exclaimed the Marquis, as he entered, “do we find you engaged in some private work of supererogation, in order to secure a good *locus standi* near the Virgin hereafter?”

“Your Grace knows,” replied Malvicino, in a faltering voice, “that a weak vessel like myself must do what he can to earn heaven. By Pope Innocent III. and his Albigensian crusade I cannot imitate you, who can convert in a wholesale way, and do good works in the gross.”

“Whom have you found,” asked the Marquis, “worthy of your spiritual charity?”

Have you been out foraging for converts? If so, he rebukes our negligence, holy Fathers."

"I have found one lost sheep—an aged woman, whom I have often seen and desired to convert—and I determined at last to bring her into the fold of the Church before her declining years brought her to the grave."

"I honour your zeal," said the Archbishop, "for it must be confessed," added he to himself, "that our monks in general don't care a ducat for the conversion of the old and ugly, although they are very assiduous when it's a young and good-looking heretic."

"My Lord Archbishop," whispered De la Mèna, drawing him aside into the upper part of the room, "an idea has struck me of which I hope you may approve. You might suggest to the Marquis that it would be a more honourable and more exculpatory penance if our suspected officer were

ordered to give that heretic a turn on the rack instead of licking the sign of the cross on those flags."

"The Virgin," said Placido Corso, gazing at the figure of the Madonna, "is merciful; why add to this woman's pangs, and make a young and unpolluted hand do the work of the executioner?"

"Shame becomes honour in the Church's service," retorted De la Mèna; "you're very tender of heretical flesh, Signor Placido. Have you any private investments?"

"Young man," replied Placido Corso, "your zeal, like that of Paul, may be sincere, and you are anxious to purge Italy from the stain of heresy. I mourn over and hate divisions; but though I am a Roman Catholic, I have not forgotten that I am also a man. I'm sure," continued the kind-hearted priest, "I've started in my dreams five times a night since I last saw the horrible scene here, and I've been as nervous as if one of Turin's

druggers had been drenching me with colchicum."

"He has a goose's heart under an ass's skin," said De la Mèna to himself.

"What's that you're saying about drugs?" asked the Marquis. "I suppose you're afraid this blood-letting of heretics will ruin our heaven-sent apothecaries. Well, I think they got their diplomas from Satan; for blood, blood, is the sum of their science and practice. I'm sure for every heretic we kill, they kill a thousand saints. Ha, ha! They do more work for the invisible world than the Church herself."

"Marquis," said the Archbishop, drawing him aside, "our brother has suggested a more satisfactory and honourable trial of our erring son, in whom you have been so long interested."

"He is bold, my Lord, to attempt to improve on your Grace's suggestion."

"Marquis, we're not in the court, but in the camp," replied the Archbishop, with

a smile. "The suggestion is, that he should turn the handle of the rack on yon heretic, for whose salvation our brother is labouring."

"Ha ! a good idea, to make the Waldensian hag useful to the last, and absolve a soul on her way down to perdition."

"Confessor," said the Marquis, "a word with you, if you can leave your old woman whom you are edging sideways into paradise. The Archbishop has resolved that he will prove the sincerity of Echard before he grants him absolution."

"I take an interest in him, for the Marchioness's sake," replied Malvicino, "and will do what you think best for this holy object."

"We won't try him much, but sentence him to rack your patient once, and finish what you have begun." An expression of anguish came over the face of the Abbot, and he trembled from head to foot.

"My Lord, you will degrade him——"

"Then you are degraded," retorted the Marquis. "Why should the Church's work degrade a soldier more than a priest?"

"Methinks I have converted her, my Lord, and it were a shame to rack her when the work is done."

"Oh, as for that, four or five twists, more or less, are nothing for a heretic. They're out of hell yet, let them be content with that."

"But she's in our fold now," replied the Abbot warmly. "At first she was obstinate, but I have made her submissive. I have argued with her, and before you came in she consented to receive the mass. I was just unloosing her as you entered. Poor old woman! it was painful to me to hurt her limbs or stain her grey hairs."

"Oh, never mind. If it had been a young and good-looking convert, I could understand your reluctance; but it's part of my *Credo* that age and ugliness are two crimes, at least in heretics."

“What do I care whether Echard was tested or not? and yet, if there’s no other consolation in my disappointment, there’s that—she’ll know who it is racking her—and he’ll find out, if he goes on. Oh! you are on a fine bridal couch, and your lover waiting for you! But I’m robbed, my plans have been thwarted, and all by these intermeddling Jesuits, who think that all who wear cowls are as interested in salvation as themselves. I did not mean to rack the girl when I threatened her. What a fool I was to carry things so far! But how could I have known that she would have held out? and yet I ought to know what heretics are. It was a mistake of mine to bring her to the touchstone. Heaven and earth! how am I to get out of this difficulty?

“I only wish,” continued he, grinding his teeth and clenching his hands, “that I had Echard on here instead, and you safe in the dungeon. And then, what makes it

worse, I do think she was relenting when they came in. I should have converted her in body and soul; and now, by the skull of Alexander, out of which Belial drinks, it's all marred! I can't now release her on any terms. Things must take their course. Why did I not choose another dungeon? I might have known that I was not safe here. Oh, it's madness to be robbed in this way of my treasure! Wait, I can at least slacken the ropes a bit. Alas! I may see her suffer before my eyes. I should have waited until Pianesse was out with his troops. Ardoine, I would forfeit my cowl for your smile; I would risk my earthly hopes for your love; I could kiss the ground on which you tread, and now I'm outwitted. I would invoke every saint in the calendar to blast the designs of those who have interfered. I would preface an anathema with the name of every Pope; but my mind is too heated, I can't remember them. Can I do nothing

but revile? O blessed Virgin, Queen of Heaven, look upon thy servant in his distress. Immaculate Queen, have I not been zealous for thy glory, and a champion for thy pure birth? I will devote to thee the largest wax taper in Turin; I will say three dozen *Aves* every day; yea, I will give twelve wax candles to the shrine of the Immaculate Conception, if thou wilt help me and deliver this girl! Well, they're coming this way! I see no help! Malvicino, monk of the order of St. Francis of Assisi, thou art a madman, and thou wilt be obliged to keep thy vow of celibacy against thy will!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PENANCE.

“ECHARD,” said the Marquis, “our Holy Fathers are anxious to receive you again into the bosom of the Church. Your offence is serious—you were sent on an important mission, the enforcement of Gastaldo’s edict, and you betrayed your trust—you were found conniving at the escape of heretics, and your false idea of honour led you to rescue some female, and in so doing you slew a soldier of the Cross. All this was done by you in the farm of La Baudène, and has only lately come to our knowledge, or we should have examined you before. The Archbishop, who was

anxious to spare my feelings, has enjoined an easy penance, and, instead of licking the sign of the Cross from one end of these flags to the other, as he first intended, he has now ordered you to turn the handle of yon rack to prove the sincerity of your penitence and your willingness to do the commands of our holy mother Church."

Echard replied not; he was overwhelmed with a dreary foreboding that the gloomy visions of his dungeon were about to be accomplished. His generous heart, which had always recoiled from persecution in the name of religion, shrank with horror from the thought of being a personal executioner; he would sooner suffer himself than do violence to his holier feelings, which had been strengthened by the glimpses of truth which he had lately gained.

"My Lord," replied Echard, "I have risked my life in battle in obedience to orders, but I must refuse to perform such an inhuman act."

"You need only turn it once," added Pianesse in a low voice, with difficulty bridling his anger, "and it's only a corpse with which they are trying you; don't be afraid, it won't hurt you, and you won't hurt it. Do this, and for the sake of the memory of the late Marchioness, I will overlook the past, and restore you to favour."

"Never will I buy worldly ease at the expense of my conscience," boldly replied Echard; "does a God of love demand such cruelties? or is heaven filled by means of racks and dungeons? My reason revolts from the idea, and I refuse to obey your commands. Look, it's not a corpse; I can see the heaving of the covering."

"Young man," said De La Mèna, "the Holy Mother would treat you with tenderness; perform this slight penance, you shall be restored to favour; but, if you are obstinate and use these arguments, you yourself may be treated as an incorrigible heretic."

"Do you hear?" shouted the Marquis, stamping and clenching his fist, "do you hear the Holy Father's words?—there, take hold of the handle, ere it be too late. It's not a corpse, it is true, but it's an old hag who has been already racked, and is at the point of death; you can't do her much harm; come now, obey at once."

"I refuse," replied Echard in a loud voice; "I will be tortured myself rather than torture another; whether she's old or young has nothing to do with the quality of the action."

"Son of a low-born peasant!" exclaimed the Marquis, his eyes flashing with rage; "I told you that you were no son of mine; how the Marchioness could have fondled such a traitor I know not—you've no noble blood in you; I disown and reject you; but, though you're no son of mine, I ought to consider your salvation. Turn then, I say, or I'll compel you."

There was a pause. Echard looked the

Marquis fixedly in the face with a fearless glance, without advancing to comply with his command.

“Take hold now!” cried Pianesse, as his voice of thunder echoed through the vaulted dungeon. Echard made no reply, when the infuriated Marquis rushed forwards, and suddenly seizing his hand forced it on the handle. As he gave it a slight motion, the wheels of the machine began to creak, the cords were strained, and a spasm ran through the recumbent form, the dread proof of its sensation.

“I will not!” cried Echard, struggling to disengage himself; “I will not be guilty of murder—wreak your vengeance on me, for I will not torture some helpless creature because her creed is different to that of Rome.”

“What!” gnashed Pianesse, as the foam frothed in his mouth, “what! you will not obey the Church nor your general.”

Drawing his sword out of its scabbard,

the Marquis made a thrust at Echard. The blow would have proved fatal had not Echard parried it, but its point grazed his face, and caused the blood to trickle down his cheek. Echard's passion was then aroused; and, forgetful of all danger, he flew at Pianesse with the intention of disarming him and of liberating the captive.

“Do you dare to strike an innocent man with your sword?—I'll wrest it from you, that I may cut the cords that bind your victim to yon rack.”

Springing upon Pianesse, he dragged him to the ground, and endeavoured to wrench the drawn sword out of his hand, but Echard was wounded in the effort. The Marquis was, however, obliged to drop the sword to defend himself from the hand-to-hand grasp of his assailant. The terrified ecclesiastics fled to the other end of the chamber, and looked on in speechless fear.

The combatants struggle; their eyes start from their sockets, their hair becomes



THE DISCOVERY OF ARDOINE.

since set with blood, they found in the morning, while each endeavoured to find his way to the pavement. Now they fell on their faces on the ground, again and again, they lay on their side, they wrestled, groined, and rolled, till they were weary of their pining.

[illegible]

stained with blood, they foam at the mouth, while each endeavours to hurl his rival on the pavement. Now they fall together on the ground, again they rise, they fall, they coil, they wrestle, goaded on by the fury of their passions.

For a moment there is a pause as they gasp for breath, but it is only to renew the struggle. Again do they reel about the room in their mad conflict; they approach the rack on which the victim lies, and the Marquis is forced against it, causing it to tremble. The Marquis stretches out his hand to grasp something for his support, and seizes the cloth which Malvicino had cast over the figure. It is dragged from the rack and torn in twain; but the eyes of the combatants are involuntarily turned to see the unhappy person whose martyrdom was the cause of their contention. At the sight of her they instantly relax their grasp, for great is their astonishment when they behold, not a withered hag

already destined to the tomb, but a girl evidently young and beautiful, whose golden locks and expressive countenance may well arrest the truant eye. Both stand in speechless astonishment at this apparition of beauty upon the deadly Gehenna.

She is unknown to Pianesse; she appears known to Echard. A cloud darkens his agitated brow; his worst fears are realized, and he feels on seeing that prisoner the self-condemnation of a murderer, for the prostrate form before him is that of Ardoine.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RACK.

THE Marquis of Pianesse gazed on Ardoine in silent admiration; even in his eye the moral purity which shone in her countenance gave quality to her loveliness, which was heightened by the flush of her excited feelings.

When Ardoine opened her eyes, and they rested on the stone walls with their implements of death, she felt a shudder of horror at finding herself confronted by the realities of torture, of which she had heard in childhood; but when she beheld Echard, a gleam of hope lit up her countenance, though she still lay bound upon the rack.

She had heard his voice, and had learned that his danger had arisen through his noble kindness at the farm of La Baudène. She was its cause; in saving her he had killed her pursuer. She acquitted him of having deceived her at the grave, and perceived that his arrest had prevented him from keeping his second appointment. She sympathized with the mental agony and self-reproaches which he must have gone through on her behalf. She had witnessed his heroism that day, in that he preferred death to torturing an unknown heretic; and her heart whispered that he would have been trebly resolute had he known who lay upon the rack.

“Not his son!” murmured Ardoine to herself; “then it is not his father that he has struck. Oh, that he belonged not to the Romish Church! Ah! in loving him am I disobeying my mother’s dying injunction? Must I struggle with my doubts and fears? Alas! why think of

him when torture or death may be the fate of us both?"

There was at least this ray of light in the dark hour—Echard was no deceiver, he was a sufferer; he had expressed his misgivings at their last meeting, that disgrace or death might follow detection. Alas! his fears seemed too truly realized.

Echard stood motionless, gazing at Ardoine, for his eyes dared not cheat his heart; nor could he have refrained from the luxury of a last fond look, though on the rack himself. There is a member of the body whose action most nearly resembles the liberty of thought, and which is free even in the chained slave. It is the eye, the best vassal of the soul.

Echard and Ardoine, though both captives, exchanged glances; but that voiceless look condensed volumes of experience, and was a clue to the hearts of both. When the burning spirit pours itself like a torrent through this narrow outlet, who

can do justice to the powerful delicacy of the human frame, or sufficiently admire this exquisite adjustment of mind and matter? That glance was the lover's absolution, the pledge of faithfulness, causing their hearts to throb again in profounder unison, eloquent of hope, even when environed by danger and death.

But Echard's feelings soon became chilled with gloomy remorse, as he reproached himself with being the destroyer of that innocent creature, for she was doomed to undergo the torments which Rome adjudges to heresy. Thank Heaven that he had not been her actual executioner, although he had been the unwilling cause of her capture. Of himself he thought not. True the cloud of death rested on both; but could he have heard once more the utterances of truth and love from her lips, it were then a sweeter thing to die.

The Marquis of Pianesse had relaxed

his grasp of Echard, and his eye was likewise riveted to her who lay bound before him, and whose accidental unveiling had arrested that struggle of death. Rarely had he seen such maidenly beauty, or felt such a sudden witchery from woman's eye. But he had observed that exchange of glances, and it afforded some explanation of the defection of Echard. He looked upon him with intenser hatred, both as a heretic, and as a rival who had dared him to this personal and humiliating encounter. Such insults could only be effaced by blood. Recovering from his surprise, the Marquis ordered the guards, whom the fray had brought into the room, to arrest Echard, and advancing to the rack, drew his sword, and cut the cords which bound the victim. Beckoning to the attendants to place Ardoine on a chair, and taking the gag from her mouth, he gave her a draught of the cordial which the charity of Rome keeps in the torture-room, in order to prevent a

heretic from defrauding the Church of the last tittle of suffering.

“Holy Confessor,” said the Marquis, addressing Malvicino, “you must be full of zeal for the suppression of heresy to mar so fair a flower; methinks you told me you had some decrepid hag on yonder rack.”

“Indeed, my Lord, you are right. Duty was compelling me to a painful task, but I thought you would be more merciful to an aged woman.”

“If you were not a monk, I should call you a fool!” retorted Pianesse. “I thought you knew more of human nature and of real life. If you had told me what she was like, I could have seen the sense of resorting to Bellarmine, and not to the rack.”

“Fear not, young woman,” continued the Marquis, addressing Ardoine, “our Church deals gently with such as you. When you learn more of our holy faith, I

doubt not you will approve our tenets. Archbishop, we must not subject this child to a baptism of blood, persuasion will avail more with such a pliant mind. I will take her under my charge."

"My Lord, she is in the Church's hand; my soul will be held responsible for her soul by our Holy Mother."

"Make yourself easy on that score," replied the Marquis, "and shift your burden on to me; it will not weigh down the point of my sword. You know I am President of the Council *de Propagandâ*, and therefore I will take good care of the conversion of this heretic."

"But I must lay it on your conscience, then, that you labour for her salvation, and that if she recants not, she shall be delivered into our hands once more."

"Agreed," replied Pianesse. "But to show you the sincerity of my desires for the salvation of our daughter, I will leave her in the hands of the Church. Here is

my late wife's ghostly councillor, who is well read in the history of our Popes, and of whose sincerity and godliness the Marchioness always spoke most highly. Confessor, can I trust you to instruct, as well as to rack, this fair convert?" added the Marquis, addressing Malvicino.

"By Pope Innocent VI., who instituted the festival of the Holy Spear, I will use my best endeavours, and read to her the Fathers from Jerome to Aquinas; and I will let you know the progress she makes, for, as you have suggested, my zeal led me too far to rack so tender a plant, when a few instructions might have brought her into the fold of the Church."

"I suppose the Marquis wants her now for himself, it will require care to hoodwink him," muttered Malvicino aside, who, in the midst of his surprise at the issues of the scene, and his disappointment at having Ardoine transferred to Pianesse's power, hoped that by prudent management

he might thwart the intentions of the Marquis, and carry out his own original designs.

“As for you!” exclaimed the Marquis, addressing Echard in a paroxysm of rage, “son of a divorced heretic, you have forgotten your faith, your education, and the benefits you have received; you are an accursed apostate; you can atone for your **crime** this time only with your life. Guards, remove the prisoner, and cast him **again** into his dungeon, and place a sentry **over him** until further orders. I shall **consult** with our Holy Council as to the **best manner** of punishing the detestable **crime** of this perjured renegade.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BANQUET.

THE Marquis was on the point of leaving the chamber of torture, after the arrest of Echard, when he was suddenly summoned by a messenger to meet the deputies of the Vaudois Communes of the Valleys. It was now Wednesday in Holy Week, and although he had taken La Tour on the previous Saturday, and pillaged the adjoining country, he had been unable to force the passes leading to the higher valleys, which were resolutely defended by the brave mountaineers. As force was unavailing for the accomplishment of his plan, he determined to have recourse to other

weapons—weapons in the use of which Rome has been ever skilled—perjury and fraud.

The deputies of the Waldenses had been summoned that morning by the sound of the trumpet to appear before the Marquis of Pianesse in the Convent of La Tour, in order to receive his assurances of friendliness and good faith. On entering the apartment, where the deputies of the Upper Communes were assembled, the Marquis, who had not yet recovered himself, addressed them in tones of anger and menace :—

“It is dishonourable of me,” exclaimed he, “to receive you who call yourselves deputies ; for from whence or of whom are you deputies ? You are criminals, rebels against your Sovereign, accomplices with those of San Giovanni and La Tour. I am wrong in admitting you to my presence.”

“Nay, my Lord,” replied David Bianquis, “we are, and ever have been, loyal to

our Duke, though he treats us as rebels, and forgets both our privileges and the concessions granted to us by his ancestors."

"You have an original way of talking to your Sovereign," retorted the Marquis. "You speak as if you were right and his Royal Highness wrong. Shall rebels make terms with their prince? However, my friends," continued he in a milder tone, remembering his tactics, "the Duke would treat you as subjects; for though he regrets that there are two religions in his Highness's dominions, yet he knows your bravery and loyalty, and I trust that we shall be able to arrange what will be suitable and honourable to both parties. Let me in the meantime do myself the honour of entertaining the Waldensian deputies, so that you may not return fasting to your mountain quarters."

* * * * *

In the refectory of the convent the

ancient oak table was loaded with a sumptuous entertainment, and the antique silver glittered on the board amid the most luxurious dishes and wines which wealth could procure in the favoured land of Italy. The company consisted of the host, the Marquis of Pianesse, wearing the uniform of a general, of some Piedmontese officers, several ecclesiastics, and three or four simple plainly-dressed men, who were the inhabitants of the adjoining mountains.

The entertainment was liberal, and the Marquis was assiduous in his attempts to win the confidence of his guests, who on their parts appeared gratified and actuated by the most cordial feelings towards their host.

“Deputies,” said the Marquis, rising after the repast was ended, “I summoned you this morning by the clarion to treat with you in the name of his Royal Highness, whom God defend, and whose health let us pledge.”

"We pledge with pleasure," responded Bianquis. "Loyalty to our sovereign hath been ever one of our glories, and did he bid us lay down our bodies as the ramparts of his throne we would obey him."

"I regret," continued the Marquis, "that any misunderstanding has arisen between us. As the Duke's representative, I have his Royal Highness's sanction for assuring you that our disposition is friendly, and that we do not wish to disquiet nor molest you."

"We, on our part," replied the elder deputies, "are not aware that we have done aught to provoke his Royal Highness; we have only presented our humble petition for the withdrawal of the edict of January 25th, and for the maintenance of our immemorial concessions."

"Gastaldo's edict," replied the Marquis, "has reference only to those who dwell in the plains at the entrance of the valleys. These, I fear, must now be con-

tented to abide by the edict, and they must betake themselves to the mountains, but as for the communes of the Upper Valleys, they have positively nothing to fear."

"It is a source of pleasure, my Lord, to hear you give us this full assurance of safety, for we have complied with the edict, though at a frightful sacrifice of property and comfort."

"You have, it is true, and you have rendered my position easy and pleasant. Be assured, then, that as regards the communes of the places which have not been proscribed, there is nothing to fear. I pledge you my word as a nobleman and my honour as a soldier of my king."

"But, my Lord, we have been already alarmed at the excesses committed by some of the soldiers of your brigade."

"I trust they were not mine, for they know my orders. Doubtless they would be isolated acts, and committed by the French under Grancey, or by those lawless

Irish, who, I wish, were where they came from."

"Your Lordship will excuse my repeating that they wore the Duke's uniform."

"Well, they must be accidental cases. It is hard to exact rigid discipline with such a body of men, especially if there be a sprinkling of foreigners among them. But fear not, my honour is linked with your safety, and I will enforce obedience at all hazards."

"Could you not, my Lord, disband your forces? Your army is more like one for the invasion of an enemy's land."

"I should be glad to send them away, but I cannot do so without the Duke's permission. Their number certainly embarrasses me, and there would be a great advantage in scattering them."

"There cannot be less than fifteen thousand men under your command, including the French, Irish, and Bavarians."

"Not so many—not so many. You see

the Duke has allowed the French to find winter quarters on this side the Alps, for knowing your strict loyalty, he would confide the strangers to your kind keeping. But there is one way in which you could yourselves subserve the cause of order, and place your loyalty to the Duke in the strongest possible light."

"In what way, my Lord?" asked Bianquis; "we will show our obedience to our Sovereign in any way that does not affect our duty to God nor our liberty of conscience."

"My knightly word is pledged for your safety, deputies, so you need not hesitate."

At this moment faint screams were heard through the open window, which seemed to come from the lower parts of the convent. The deputies involuntarily exchanged glances, and the Marquis of Pianesse turned pale, as he muttered an execration to himself.

At a private nod, an attendant shut the

window to exclude those screams which issued from the torture-room.

Beware, you trustful, honest men! The innocence of the dove is no match for the subtlety of the serpent. Could you have seen at that moment the death struggles of your revered friend David Prins, it would have saved many hundreds of lives and nerved your arms to fight to the last upon Angrogna's crags.

"You may render a service to your country and to me," continued the Marquis, "by engaging each of your respective communes to receive and lodge one of the regiments which have been sent hither."

"How many are there?"

"There is the regiment of Grancey, commanded by Du Petitbourg, the regiments of Galeazzo, Chablais, and St. Damian. By receiving these without resistance, not only will the localities which shall receive them be secure from all violence, but it may be that the prince, touched with this proof

of confidence, will display less rigour in the exclusion pronounced against the towns of the plains."

"We will do what we can to persuade our respective communes to act agreeably to your wishes, and shall rely on your knightly honour for the assurances of safety which you have made. But we do not see why they should wish to penetrate into the higher valleys, where the climate is trying and the necessities of life are scarce. If they remain at the entrance, they shall be supplied with forage and food."

"No," replied the Marquis, "we want possession of the passes; it is this proof of confidence that will touch the heart of his Royal Highness, and convince him that your loyalty has been calumniated. My knightly word is pledged for your safety."

"We will speak to our people, then, and persuade them to agree to the terms. And you shall take possession of them in

three days. We rely on your word and honour, my lord."

"You may do so. I swear to protect you as I hope for salvation through our Saviour and our Blessed Lady."

"‘*Non servanda fides hæreticis*,’ is the dogma of the council of Constance," muttered he to himself as the deputies bowed their last salutations and retired. "*Ad extirandos hæreticos* is the teaching of our holy Propaganda. My soldiers shall not wait long for marching orders if we can get up the valleys. When once they are snugly hidden in every house, then my signal shall be given, and we shall read the heretics a lecture on the Catholic faith and practice."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COLETTE.

THE warlike preparations of the Marquis of Pianesse and the capture of La Tour spread consternation throughout the valleys, and many of the more experienced, foremost among whom was Janavel, conjectured that the Church of Rome was about to celebrate the Easter of 1655 by carrying out her long-cherished project of exterminating the Waldensian Church.

It was on the evening of the day when the deputies had been entertained by the Marquis of Pianesse, that Janavel climbed on to one of the crags of the spur of Pian Pra, which overlooks the spot called to this

day the Vineyards of Lucerna. He was accompanied by the Moderator Léger, who during the times of peril had not deserted his post, and had been present at several of the skirmishes on the hills of Angrogna. They stood upon the crest of a projecting rock, and looked for some time in mournful silence on the valley of Lucerna, the hazy windings of which they could trace from Villar until it widened beyond the well-known farm of La Baudène.

“It appears as if our ancient history were about to repeat itself, Moderator,” said Janavel, addressing his companion. “Look! do you see that faint glimmer? there is La Tour. That building to the left, in which you see the light, is the convent. In that is the Marquis of Pianesse, a general surrounded with his army, and President of the Propaganda, attended by his inquisitors.”

“Friend Janavel,” interposed the *barba*, “remember the miracle of Horeb. The bush

was on fire, and yet was not consumed. That is the emblem of the church of Christ. It hath been so with us, and so, God helping us, it shall be yet."

"But, Moderator, the Marquis has been deluding our deputies to-day, in that convent; and I fear they have acted most unwisely in consenting to have troops cantoned in the upper valleys."

"I fear so, Janavel. You and I have always protested against such weak concessions. Can the leopard change his spots? Can the Pelice run backwards? Can the vine fruit amid the snow? Can the alpine plant endure the scorching valleys? Then may the Church of Rome change her nature, and love peace, liberty, and toleration. These concessions do not disarm their hostility, and only leave us completely at their mercy. What they want is not our submission, but our extirpation."

"Yes," replied Janavel, "experience is a hard master, and we read its past lessons too

slightly, considering that the Church of Rome never ceases to carry on an open or a secret warfare against us. Fraud and treachery, violence, bloodshed, the dungeon, the rack, and the stake,—these are her weapons for bringing Cæsar and his empire to the foot of Calvary's Cross. But Moderator, from the little that fell from you, I gathered that you had become a soldier upon Angrogna's hills. Can you give me an outline of the events of the last three days?"

"La Tour," replied Léger, "as you know, was taken by stratagem on Saturday evening. On Monday immense bodies attacked us on those heights above La Tour, St. John, and Angrogna, but we held our entrenchments. Yesterday two attacks were made, and I was in the one made on Tailaret. Jahier repulsed that on Castelluzzo, and through God's mercy we were also successful. We lost two men and they left fifty dead in the field,—a fact sufficient to justify the saying of the Duke, 'that the

skin of a Vaudois always costs fifteen or twenty of his best Catholics.' ”

“ Friend Léger,” said Janavel, “ my heart is very sorrowful. My beloved wife has long been taken from me and may have perished, our family are outcasts, and I have my misgivings about this army. How many men are there ? ”

“ If report speaks true they are put down at fifteen thousand in all—French, Irish, Bavarians, Piedmontese, and a number of bandits and outlaws whom love of plunder and promised indulgences have drawn together, after the examples of Alexandrini and Cattané. It looks as if some bloody work were at hand.”

“ I do trust our deputies have not been deceived ; but how they treated the two who were sent the third time to Turin, when they were waiting for the final answer ! Pianesse had left the evening before, to bring his army here as a reply to our petitions, and the remonstrances against

Gastaldo's edict of the Swiss cantons of Zurich, Basle, Schaffhausen, and Appenzel, dated March 5, has produced no effect. There's some one coming! Who is this? Ah, Raynald, my boy, where hast thou been? Shielding some helpless one from harm, I feel assured."

"Father, father, I fear that fraud and treachery are preparing death for us. I have heard of so many separate acts of murder and barbarity, that it looks like the prelude to a general massacre. But oh! father, how can I talk to you in this quiet manner? Ardoine is taken. She went to the grave of her mother, she was seen by a Piedmontese officer, the one who delivered Gastaldo's order to us on the 25th of January, and with whom I had the wrangle—he has decoyed and carried her off."

"O God of heaven!" cried the elder, "give us patience to bear what thou seest fit to lay upon us. And hast thou heard anything of thy mother, Raynald?"

“ I have a good hope that she is alive in the convent. Of the rest some are at Rora, and grandfather is over at Castelluzzo. Of aunts Marguerite and Madeleine I have heard nothing. But look, father, what’s that on the opposite hill? Can you not see? There’s a column of white smoke rising out of those trees, which you see so plainly in the moonlight. It’s too large for a bonfire. Nor is it the stacks, it’s the houses on fire.”

“ Ah ! Moderator, my words are true. I fear the work of destruction has begun !”

“ Oh listen,” continued Raynald, “ the wind is blowing from that direction. I hear shouts—they come from that quarter—there is treachery. Father, father, let us make the signal of distress on the Colette. There, did you not hear that faint noise, and those shots? Let us make the signal, so that the fugitives on the heights of Angrogna may take warning. There are a good many of

our brethren on the hills opposite, for most of the exiles went there."

Janavel sat for a moment with his head between his knees, as if in a reverie.

"Yes, Raynald, do it, do it. The sudden rush of calamities overwhelmed my mind for the instant. Pastor, must you return to the side of Angrogna? If so, be careful. God be with you."

The father and son, after collecting all the dry sticks they could find, pieces of brushwood, and the cones of the pines, lighted the heap, adding gradually large fragments of the firs and birches to feed the flame. The yellow streak soon shot into the sky, and cast its tawny glare for many a rood athwart the mountain side.

"Heap on, my brave boy, heap on wood; let us make such a sign that those on Angrogna's hill and the Vachère must see and understand it." The father and son then sat for some time upon the ground in silence.

"Look, father," suddenly exclaimed

Raynald, "there is a bright spot on the hill opposite. It's the answer to our signal. How it increases in size and brightness ! Ah, now a gust of wind has quenched it. Now it blazes again. Thank God, that we have put them on their guard."

"Thank God," added Janavel, "for there are many fugitives there. Possibly they have seen the troops creeping up the valley, so as to surprise Pra-del-Tor. Heap on more wood, my boy, that our beacon may be seen far and near. Oh ! my heart is wounded within me ; my church ! my valleys ! I have only six or seven brother peasants on whose arms I can rely, and what are we against so many ?"

"Father, you must not faint. You shall find in me one who will fall by your side fighting for liberty of conscience, and the purity of our mothers and daughters. I may well perish," murmured the young man to himself, "for Ardoine is lost."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MARQUIS.

IN the window of a spacious apartment in the upper part of the convent of La Tour, a young girl stood absorbed in thought, and indifferent to all the objects of luxury which might have attracted her attention. The view from the casement overlooking the Valley of the Pelice was one which might have enchanted a heart free from care and sorrow. In the background towered the massive Alps, whose descending spurs were delicately tinged with the hues of the returning spring. Aloft the bleached snow claimed kindred with the glistening masses of overhanging clouds,

while in the foreground the pastoral beauties of the valley might have awakened a bucolic of the Mantuan poet. The scene was, as it were, an epitome of nature from the pole to the tropics, an alliance of the sublimities of Switzerland with the softer loveliness of Italy.

That maiden's eye gazed on the view through the dimming mist of falling tears; she looked upon the hills over which she had roamed with the vagrant foot of childhood; on yon abutting crag she had gathered the first fruits of spring, and on the sward just visible in the hollow of that upland range she used to summon her flocks. As she looks her eye becomes riveted by a spot floating in the sky; it is a spectacle which makes her heart more sorrowful, for it is the symbol of liberty, and she is a prisoner. It is the eagle of the Alps. In her mountain watchings she had often gazed upon the kingly bird, and her heart had heaved with the emotion which

the grand and beautiful in nature elicit even from an undisciplined mind. The eagle floating along as if he were the conscious vassal of heaven, and an elemental something above the grovelling earth beneath, sails on steady wing, as if power, liberty, and royalty were his birthright. His eye quails not where man quails, but beholds unblenched the sun itself. He soars above the piercing Alps, and looks down upon the scathed crags which Nature sets apart for his heritage. He swerves not for the advancing tempest, for he is a part of Nature, her type of the repose of power in the sunshine, and of reckless majesty in the surging storm. "The way of an eagle in the air is wonderful," says the wise man; "they mount up with wings, they are swift as the wind, and their nest is exalted on high amid the clefts of the ragged rocks."

Ardoine was interrupted in the midst of her reflections by the entrance of the Marquis of Pianesse.

“Ardoine,” said he, advancing towards her, “have you reflected on my proposals? your fate is in your own hands; only recant, and become my bride, and all is yours.”

“My Lord, you mock one who is a wretched prisoner. I cannot—I dare not!”

“Do not be too hasty; the conditions are easy; consent to go to mass occasionally, and I will marry you secretly. I swear that I love you; I cannot help it. It is a contradiction that one of my rank and religion should kneel to you; but, alas! love is a mighty tyrant, and there are no arguments or reasons when he has the mastery.”

“Oh, my mother—my friends! What can I do? Would that I were in my grave; never will I recant.”

“Well, I must overlook your heresy, if you will keep it to yourself; you shall follow your own conscience. See how I

love you ; I make myself inconsistent ; for do you not know the object of my mission here ? It is to convert your Churches, and yet for the love of you I will tolerate what I hate like sin."

"I cannot—indeed I cannot ! Would you care for a heart whose love is given to another ?"

"To another ? Whom can you have seen ? How can a person in your position have seen anybody who could be my rival ? Think of what you are rejecting. You shall become mistress of my estates on the Mincio, and of those near Genoa ; you shall have whatever luxury wealth can give to minister to your pleasures."

"I have been brought up to prefer truth and purity of conscience to all the good things which the world can give."

"That is your way of talking, I know," replied the Marquis, "but it is a different thing when you are tried. Very few can resist these worldly goods when there is a

chance of their getting them. I offer you honour, riches, possessions, and all that makes life agreeable, as an exchange for suffering poverty, and it may be—I need not tell you what the Church of Rome awards to heretics.”

“My Lord, my conscience forbids me. O God! keep me firm; I will be true to my faith and my Saviour. O mother, mother!”

“Nay, do not sorrow, for I mean you kindly. Are you not a woman, and should you not like to do what others do? Such beauty as yours should not be hidden in obscurity; you will outvie the proud ladies of Turin, who have been your superiors. For myself, if I could convert you to our holy faith, Italy would boast no fairer bride destined to shine in courts.”

“I have never seen these things,” replied Ardoine; “and what would they be to me in the midst of the trials of my people and the ruin of my family? No,

no, I will perish here, but I will never forswear my heart nor conscience."

"You have it in your power to do good to your friends. You belong to that family at La Baudène of which I have heard; some of your aunts and uncles are prisoners in this convent."

Ardoine started; a deadly pallor overspread her face, and the natural lustre of her eye was clouded with a look of anguish.

"Oh, for God's sake, spare my dear friends; release them, I entreat you, by the love of God."

"You have it in your power, Ardoine; speak the word, and the dungeons can be opened, and they shall be free."

"Oh, what am I to do? O Heaven! why is such a cruel choice forced on me?"

"But if you will neither recant nor have me as your husband or lover, you shall be taken to see their dying agonies.

They shall feel the rack, and the pulley, and the fire; they shall die by inches, with all the torture possible. I will flay alive that man David, who is your uncle, and leave the manner of his death as a proverb to posterity."

"O God, art thou in heaven? Dost thou hear? What can I do? My mother, I wept over thy grave, but now I rejoice over thy death. Forswear my faith I cannot, even to save them, but to sacrifice my worldly happiness, in this there can be no actual sin. What can I do? I cannot!"

"You have much in your power; listen to me with attention, and I will tell you my plans. Know that we intend to celebrate this festival of Easter by a general massacre, to which those of past history shall be as nothing."

"Have pity, my Lord, pity, oh pity!" cried Ardoine, falling at his feet, and clasping him round his knees.

Pianesse could not resist gazing at that lovely face for a moment, and then he continued—

“I have a good army of several thousands; nay, I have had your deputies here, and I have got my troops up to the very ends of the valleys, and to-night and to-morrow my soldiers will establish themselves under every single roof. They will then be able, if the inhabitants won't recant, to use the sword and the fire in a manner the Holy Office cannot do on its small scale. Now, if I am too far compromised to arrest all these proceedings, and slake our holy missionaries' thirst for blood, still I can do something to make things better. Think of your friends, your mother, your uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters; will you not reproach yourself if you hear their dying groans, or see from this window their houses burning on yonder crags? Oh think! rarely hath a young person had so much in her power. I love

you ; my love is blind and unreasoning ; it is passionate, and admits not of rebuke ; yea, a heart and a love like yours is worth winning, and would be an honour even to a warrior. Think over these motives, and if you would know more of our faith, I will let my Confessor talk to you on the spiritual view of the question. But you must decide soon, for there is no time to be lost."

"Oh, I cannot ! Oh, mother ! oh, Echard !" So saying, Ardoine fainted, and lay insensible at the feet of the Marquis.

"Echard !" muttered Pianesse to himself in a tone of anger, "is that wretched serpent to cross my path again ? I must lose no time in despatching him out of my way, and when she hears that he is dead, then she may be more ready to listen to reason. I will send my Confessor to her, and instruct him to soothe her spirit, and suit his arguments to her case. After all,

it will be a most extraordinary and capricious act in me to make a heretic girl like this my wife," said the Marquis, leaving the room. "I must see if I cannot overcome her scruples, and gain my point by a different method."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PROSELYTISER.

“DAUGHTER,” said Malvicino, as he entered Ardoine’s chamber, after having received the instructions of the Marquis; “we yearn for the salvation of your soul. Will you not become reconciled to the holy Catholic Church?”

“I do not want to hear your arguments,” replied Ardoine. “Leave me; you are the source of all my sorrow.”

“I! who saved you from Echard, who would have ruined you!”

“Perjure not yourself, most wretched man. Did not that scene in the dungeon

absolve him, and did not you place me on that dreadful instrument?"

"But indeed I did not mean to hurt you. I would not harm a hair of your head. I will now act as your friend. The Marquis of Pianesse intends to marry you, or to go through a false ceremony to satisfy your conscience. You know him not. He is jealous, cruel, and tyrannical, and when you have served his purpose, then the punishment of a heretic will be your fate. Let me urge you to escape. I can get possession of the necessary keys, and all the people about the convent know me. Oh, think of yourself, and trust me this once."

"Escape with you!" said Ardoine, looking him steadfastly in the face. "Can I give you credit for sincerity of purpose after what I have seen? No, I should fear another plot. I will bear the present rather than rush into a worse future."

"But you must not judge me only by

the past; a man may repent. Why should I not desire to repair the injury which I have done you? By Pope Borgia," said the Abbot aside, "I wish I could imitate his son Valentine, who, after being an archbishop and cardinal, was made a layman. I would never hurt so beautiful a form," continued he aloud. "Your eyes, my daughter, would have enchanted the capricious Mahomet."

"How can we be expected to recant," said Ardoine, "if we are to judge of your religion by the acts of its professed ministers? Are fraud, lying, lust, and cruelty the marks of the religion of Christ? Whatever our doctrines may be, at least they bring forth good fruit, as even you our enemies cannot help admitting."

"I wish I could ever listen to you, if you won't to me. To hear those lips speak, to see those eyes flash, is Elysium to the Franciscan. Oh, Ardoine, smile upon me; pity one whom your beauty

has made miserable. I could not have turned the rack on you; I would have saved you. Be mine, and I will brave the thunders of the Pope and the rage of the Marquis."

So saying he clasped her hands and pressed them to his lips in his impassioned fervour. Ardoine, though for the moment taken by surprise, struggled to get free with the energy of despair, while her screams rang throughout the stone corridor.

"By the deposed Popes she will betray me. I must stop this," muttered the Abbot, placing his hand over her mouth.

"By the groans of the dying!" thundered the Marquis of Pianesse, bursting into the apartment at that moment, "is this the way in which an Abbot and a Confessor reconciles heretics to the Holy Church? You have not studied the life of Alexander VI. for nothing."

With these words he dealt a terrible

blow upon the Abbot's face, which laid him senseless on the floor.

"Hypocrite!" said the Marquis, kicking him on the ground, "take the reward of your knavery; you shall find that the Marquis of Pianesse is not to be insulted with impunity. In future, don't mix up the secular with the sanctity of the Confessor. Ah! I can understand the rack scene now. If it were not for the scandal of the thing, and the injury it would do us, I would order him into close arrest, or give him a taste of the rack myself. But the ecclesiastics reject secular authority, and it would not do now to have dissensions in our Councils; so, though he has proved himself a fool, he must enjoy his own benefit of clergy."

Malvicino lay motionless, stunned with the blow, and it was some time before he gradually recovered his senses, and realized his position. Shame, disappointment, and hatred filled his breast, when he felt that

he had been detected in his wicked designs, and personally humiliated by the hand of a soldier. Stung with these feelings, he slunk to his cell to count his beads, and to make his peace with the Immaculate Virgin.

“If I had lived in the good old time of John XXII.,” growled the Abbot, as he entered his chamber, “he’d not have made me pay much for this or any other misdemeanour. A few crowns would have balanced my account either for this or the next world.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ARCHBISHOP.

THERE is a week in the year which has received the epithet of "Holy," because it has been consecrated by the most thrilling memories of the Founder of our religion. From the manger to the cross He was a sufferer; but, as at this time, the various streams of sorrow mingled together, and rolled in with a flood upon his devoted soul, when He offered Himself up to God a sacrifice for the sins of men. What can be conceived more touching than the moral spectacle afforded to the Principalities of heaven and to the human race by the Man of Sorrows?

The Man of Sorrows ! What a title for Him who dwelt in uncreated bliss from a trackless eternity, and whose word sprinkled the universe with worlds. There have been thousands of sorrowing men on earth, but only one Man of Sorrows. This was his title, because He loved us, and gave Himself for us. He suffered that we might not suffer. His character was such that the bruised reed, hanging together only by a single fibre, was never snapped by his gentle touch, and shortly before his death He bade Rome's Patron sheath his weapon, warning him that all they that used the sword should perish by the sword. When amongst us He exhibited phases of moral excellence and of self-sacrificing love which have left the angels eternal students, and bequeathed his virtues for man's imitation, even as his labours were undertaken for man's benefit.

The Churches of Italy have, on this special day, been reciting (alas, in a dead

language!) the minute record of those affecting sufferings, whereby the mystery of redemption was accomplished on Calvary, but no congenial spirit has been breathed into the councils of that crusading Church which bears the surname of the lowly Nazarene. The valleys of the Alps present an example of her Apostolic policy. An excited people, ravaged homesteads, desolated hearths, acts of violence and rapine, personal mutilation and agonies, have been the persuasions whereby she would win converts, not to Calvary's cross, but to her own corrupted creed and ceremonies.

On the evening of Good Friday, April 23rd, 1655, the Marquis of Pianesse reposed in the chamber set apart for his use in the convent of La Tour. Before him were all the adjuncts of official dignity common to every age. Packets of papers, parchments, edicts, manuscripts, law-books, writings on ecclesiastical and civil jurispru-

dence, surrounded him, and he sighed as he surveyed the littered table.

"This conversion," he exclaimed aloud suddenly, "is heavy work, and tries one more than campaigning. What with disputing with deputies about privileges, concessions, and edicts—what with arguing in polemic theology with self-educated peasants, who easily perplex our priests in the Scriptures—what with cajoling and keeping our troops well in hand, and scattering them for their work, one need have seen something of diplomatic service and know the art of language as a veil of thought. I've had a hard time of it; I shall be glad when it's over. But I suppose I shall earn a decoration—ay, and the name of Pianesse shall be eternally connected with these valleys of the Alps."

He leaned back in his chair, and yawned, as he threw up a silver ducat into the air, saying--

"I would not give that for the chance

you'll have of supping to-morrow night, ye heretics ! At last we've entrapped you, and Rome will blot you out. Oh, soul of my dear Marchioness," continued he, crossing himself, "thy money has been well spent, and will produce a rich harvest of souls.

"Good evening, Archbishop," said Pianesse, rising and addressing the prelate, who entered at this moment ; "I crave your blessing ; I hope you'll sup with me, and I'll order up our refreshment at once. Our cause prospers. We only want fine weather to-morrow for our crusade—eh ? I think we have laid the train well ; it only needs the spark."

"I suppose you are all ready," said the Archbishop.

"Ready when the clock strikes. Your flag has just been prepared, and the machinery has no lack of oil. We will unfurl our banner in the name of the Church, and the soldiers of the seventeenth century will do what the Bull of the fifteenth left undone."

"You have housed them comfortably in their new quarters, Marquis?"

"I have got them pretty nearly into every house; they will be sleeping to-night under roofs many of which won't be standing by this time to-morrow. The rival *barbets* will be at peace then, like Guelph and Ghibelline in a plague-pit."

"That's sharp practice," said the prelate; "the Church has got the best of it this time, I think; the Pope will be sending you a decoration, Marquis."

"I don't deserve that," replied the General; "I only try to do my duty—may it ease the soul of my departed Marchioness!"

"How she will rejoice, if she can look down from the other world. But, tell me, Marquis, how did you overcome these fellows, for they seem sharp enough?"

"Nothing easier. Only swear to them on the Bible, and they will believe you at once. I had the deputies to dinner, and

told them if they would receive a few troops for a day or two, as a test of loyalty, it would satisfy the Duke."

"Capital, capital! Why, Marquis, you've studied with the Jesuits to some purpose. I don't think the brains of a Capuchin would show such skill in the Church's service. Have you been to mass to-day?"

"Of course I have. I dare not inaugurate this holy crusade without the sanction of Heaven; and besides, Archbishop, you know this is Good Friday; you see that's the reason I've only fish for supper."

"You've a pretty good supply," answered the prelate, as he surveyed the table in the next room.

"A Catholic cook," replied the Marquis, "would be vexed if you did not allow him some latitude in disguising fish; so it is their fault if you think the flesh is pampered. Were you at mass, Archbishop?"

"Did you not hear me? I chanted the

Gospel; but since I've lost my front teeth, I'm not good for much, and I confess I took my nap during most of the service; besides, that young fellow preached such a time. These neophytes, who have zeal without discretion, do not know when to stop, and yet he had an hour-glass near him. When he's as old as I am he will be cooler, and if his legs get more rheumatic he'll have more sympathy for the flesh, and be better pleased to sit than stand."

"I thought it too long," rejoined the Marquis, "but it straightened my conscience. How this day will be remembered if we do our work cleverly! We ought to pluck them up this time, and eclipse Cat-tanée and De La Trinité."

"I suppose you have settled all the details of to-morrow's programme? Have you arranged about hoisting up your signal?"

"I've got two men sitting up all night, and a flask of wine to keep them warm. The weather looks well; I think we shall

have a fine spring morning, and that our flag will be seen from the mountain-tops for several miles."

"*Dominus vobiscum*," said the Archbishop; "commend yourself to the Holy Virgin, for without her help you can do nothing. Ah, well, how time flies! I remember when I was at St. Peter's, forty years ago, hearing the Gospel there. It was the Holy Father, Paul V., who was in the chair. He was valiant for the Church, for he suffered himself to be called 'Vice-God upon earth, the monarch of Christendom, the supporter of Papal Omnipotence.' Ah, how things pass away! we've had four Popes since then. Are you retiring to refresh yourself for the morrow?"

"No, my Lord; I may as well confide a little affair to your Grace, in which you can help me. Absolution I don't want; but your fingers can do me a good turn. I've seen a girl here—one that puts our Turin women to shame, and I am determined

to have her. Marriage is the shortest way. I'll convert her forcibly after that, and if not, a line from the Vatican will make me a bachelor again."

"Marquis, you surprise me. Are you not looking after the flesh? Are you joking?—you marrying a heretic!"

"She's only that now; wait till I've drilled her six weeks, and you'll give me more credit when you see how I can play the ecclesiastic. There's more tact wanted there than in letting loose four regiments of cut-throats and the scum of Ireland to murder. Though in both lines I pique myself on my tact."

"It's an odd freak, General."

"It is, I grant; but, however, Nature is contradictory, and truth is oftentimes a hundred times stranger than fiction. Love is blind, and a sort of madness, as we used to learn at school. At any rate, let us go through a false ceremony; you can read something in Latin—the Burial Service or

the Ordination of Priests, and that will soothe her conscience."

"Is it the girl we rescued on the rack? If so, I can be more sympathizing, for her eyes were such as would make a priest forswear his cassock, and become an Abelard. Ah, well I remember, in my young days, when I was a popular confessor——, so I must wink at a soldier sacrificing at other shrines besides that of Mars. But when is it to take place?"

"Just after midnight, when the fast is over, will suit me; I shall need only you, as we will do the thing secretly. As for that fellow Echard, I have hardly had time to think of him. We must make an example of him. The Holy Inquisition gives us a choice of methods—the pulley, the fire, the *Chevalet*, the rack. Which shall he begin with, Archbishop?"

"I am perplexed," replied the prelate. "Was not this person supposed to be your son?"

“He was never a son of mine; you could tell that by his acts, which betray his breed. The Marchioness, having no children of her own, adopted and educated him; and in furtherance of her wishes, I have given him every advantage, and all these honourable posts in the work of suppressing heresy, and this is my requital. But past benefits must be the gauge of his sufferings. Is that not a moral axiom you sometimes illustrate in your preaching?”

“Where is the apostate now?” inquired the Archbishop.

“Safe in one of the lower dungeons, with a sentry at the door. As soon as we have done our work to-morrow in gross, I shall consider him in detail, with any other culprits.”

“Well, see that he receives absolution, Marquis; let not your wrath pursue him beyond the grave.”

“You know,” replied the Marquis, speaking gravely, “what our poet says, and

what your practice illustrates, '*Ici vive la pitié quand on est bien mort.*' "

"Well, General, you are doing the Church's work, and she must not interfere with your private affairs. I will refresh myself with a little sleep, Marquis, and then I shall be ready to earn my midnight fees."

So saying, the Archbishop retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MARRIAGE.

THE convent bell had tolled the hour of midnight, and announced the commencement of Saturday, the 24th April, a day which must leave an eternal blot upon the Church of Rome. Would that it were a solitary date in her annals of persecution ! Candles were burning on the high altar in the chapel of the convent some time after *nocturnes*, as if for some special purpose. Their light shone on the carved oak stalls of the choir, the handiwork of one of the monks, who had spent thirty-six years in their completion. The place was otherwise dark and silent.

The clock has tolled the half-hour after midnight, and a group was standing before the altar. It consisted of the Archbishop of Turin, the Marquis of Pianesse, Ardoine, and a female attendant. Ardoine's head was covered with a veil, which concealed her tears. She glanced timidly at the crucifix, which stood in front of a magnificent altar-piece, and at the marble statues surrounding the figure of the Madonna and Child. She then turned her eyes upwards, as if imploring mercy from heaven, though she recoiled with horror on beholding the blasphemous representation of God the Father on the frescoed ceiling. In this trying hour the calm courage of simplicity and innocence did not desert her; resistance on her part appeared hopeless; she must submit passively, and commit her way to Him who judgeth righteously. She was not, however, without consolation; many passages of Scripture were graven on her memory, and she kept repeating to herself the words,

“When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” “Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct; they are quenched as tow.”

These verses in a chapter she had once learned for her grandfather rang in her ears as with the sound of a trumpet, and enabled her even at that moment to taste the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Her calmness, as is often the case, was greater in the stern reality than in the anticipation of the trial. Confinement and mental sorrow had somewhat impaired the freshness of her cheek, and her love-lit smile had waxed fainter, as if the elastic spirit of youth had been crushed.

The Archbishop, meanwhile, robed himself for the ceremony. Stepping over to the Marquis he whispered—

“Well, my Lord, what shall I do? shall I wed you according to the laws of the Council of Trent, or shall I intone the instructions about the rubrics and the saints’ days? Have you brought a ring with you?”

“I protest in the sight of God,” exclaimed Ardoine, “against this impious profanation of marriage; I will never be your bride. If you compel me to become so by brute force, may Heaven pity me and cancel the vow.”

“Come, Holy Father,” said the Marquis, advancing to the altar, “it is too cold to listen here to the homilies of our fair penitent; I trust before long that she will give more attention to your arguments in favour of the holy Roman faith, and that you will welcome her to your arms as a daughter.”

“It will rejoice our heart to do so,”

replied the Archbishop; "now, daughter, are you ready?"

"Oh, is there no help!" exclaimed Ardoine, whom despair had rendered almost passive; "oh, my mother! mother, would that your daughter lay beside you! Lord, who didst divide the Red Sea of old, and saved the three children in the midst of the fiery flames, is thy hand shortened now that it cannot save?"

The Archbishop turned his face to the east; and, after bowing to the altar, proceeded with the opening passage of the Marriage Service. Pianesse stretched forth his hand, and laid it on Ardoine's. It sent a thrill through her frame, and she drew back several paces. He then grasped it by force and gave it to the priest, who held it in that of the Marquis. The deep cadences of the Archbishop's voice rang through the deserted chapel, and echoed along the rafters of the ceiling. The irrevocable act was about to be completed.

“O Lord!” cried out Ardoine, in a voice of unutterable anguish, “again I call. I remind thee of Thy past help to Thy saints! of the honour of Thy name! of our prayers and praises in our lost home! Rend the heavens and come down, let the mountains flow down at Thy presence; God of the fatherless, protect me, arise and help for Thy name’s sake!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DUNGEON.

ONCE more had the grating key of the dungeon turned upon Echard. His prospects were indeed gloomy, for his faint lingering hopes were extinguished, and an ignominious death seemed his inevitable fate. The suspicions the authorities had entertained of his heresy had deepened into the awful accusation. He had made the Marquis a mortal enemy by that personal encounter; and he felt assured that if he did not perish by the sentence of the Church, he should fall a victim to personal revenge. Every step he heard seemed to him like that of the messenger of death; and when his

jailer entered from time to time, he was prepared for the summons to instant execution. But since he had last lain on those damp stones he had seen Ardoine. Alas ! it had been a sight to enhance his misery, and to give to death a bitter sting. He hardly dared review the scenes of that chamber. She lay on the rack, and possibly had undergone mutilation. He shuddered when he remembered the agonizing death of Marguerite on that same instrument, and now another of that singular family had doubtless perished through the guile and violence of the Church of Rome. It was clear that she had been at the rendezvous, and would have condemned him as a betrayer. Yet the scene in the dungeon might have undeceived her, and convinced her of the loyalty of his heart. But why interrogate the past ? Hopeless despair rested on the future. They were both prisoners, in the grasp of the infuriated Marquis. In vain he tried to solve the mystery

of their betrayal. It was probable that his own arrest had been designed beforehand; but who could have revealed Ardoine's counsel? The Marquis must have captured her. But, then, he would not have placed her on the rack, and his whole manner in the dungeon indicated surprise on his part. Echard stopped suddenly. Some faint screams were just audible. He wrung his hands at the thought that Ardoine might be now undergoing torture. She might be a corpse. Oh that he knew the truth, and then he might dash his brains out against the dungeon walls. In the midst of his agony his hand rested against the inscription which he had noticed before. These words spake with authority, as if they were not the utterances of men but of God. That holy name was not unknown to him, and the merit ascribed to the Saviour's blood seemed so full and perfect that he would throw his soul upon it alone. He would make his peace with God, and prepare for death.

“To-morrow’s sun,” cried he aloud, “may be my last. Bright visions seemed to have dawned upon me once, but they are now quenched in darkness; and that loved one, who would have led me to truth and happiness, has perished, and through my own instrumentality. Would that I knew more of God’s truth! I have learned to doubt and reject my own creed, but the void of my heart is not yet filled. I must stamp this passage on my memory, and trust that it may be a safe guide to my guilty soul when entering eternity. Ah! I hear a key turning in the lock. Death, thou mayest be now approaching. This text shall be my watchword. I will have no monk’s absolution, but calmly bid death welcome in my Saviour’s name.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SENTRY.

MALVICINO remained long in his cell on his knees before the image of the Virgin, which was in one corner opposite to the traditional skull and cross-bones, those monitors to the tenant of the uncertainty of life and of the certainty of death. He gazed fixedly at the image, crossing himself from time to time, and kissing the floor.

“I have it by our present Pope Alexander VII.,” cried he, with a sudden exclamation, which seemed a strange interruption to his pious meditation in honour of the Virgin. “Blessed be the Holy Mother ; it must

be she who has suggested it. I have it. I'll trick the general with his own weapons, and see which can get the victory. When it's the Church *versus* the world, let the soldier take care. Yes, I think I see it in all its details, a bold and complicate conception. By the poisoner Cæsar, Duke Valentine, it's a misfortune when there are too many links, and one has to depend on other people who fail sometimes, and disappoint one's calculations. But there's no help for it, however. Ruin or revenge. He'll do it. His love will prompt him, and then afterwards——. Why, I've not lived threescore years in the world if I can't overreach him who has hardly turned the score. The dagger will quiet him, and the Pelice will take him out to sea. But how about getting to him? That's rather a difficulty. Methinks it is Mandolin who is on duty. Shall I pave the way, or do it at the last moment? I'd better gain him at any rate."

Malvicino accordingly watched his op-

portunity, and joined the soldier who kept guard over Echard's dungeon.

"Soldier of the cross," said he, addressing Mandolin, "I am sorry the Marquis has given you such unpleasant work in this dreary stone passage; so damp and lonely. Still you are serving the Church. I am her officer as well as you, and we cannot always do what is agreeable."

"It is certainly cold here, Holy Father, and I wish I had a light, or some company."

"That you may well do, for it is in places like these that the ghosts of the dead walk up and down at night. I believe you were on duty last night. Did you hear any groans under these flags? for a dreadful murder was committed here just twenty-seven years ago last night, and they say the stones are soaked with blood every year at the same hour. Here, I will hold my taper. There you see, there is a reddish tinge on the stone. Shall

I look at your shoes, and see if they are wet or bloody ?

“Holy Mother of God, defend me !” exclaimed the soldier, in a tone of unfeigned alarm. “Reverend Father, stay with me. Have you any holy water with you to sprinkle the passage ?”

“Perhaps it was to-night,” continued Malvicino, “because the monks are afraid of this passage on Good Friday, for fear they should hear the groans. The spirit returns either last night or to-night. Yes, it would be to-night, since your shoes are not yet wet with blood.”

“Oh, what shall I do if I am to pass another night here alone ?”

“You’re safe as long as I’m here. But I should like to know the truth. Look to-night into that dark corner as the clock strikes twelve, and see if you can see a skeleton. He still wears some flesh on his eyes, ears, and right hand, which drips with blood. He groans four times, and then

kneels on the stone where you are now standing."

"Santissima Maria! protect me," cried Mandolin, in an agony of fear. "What can I do?"

"I could sprinkle the place with holy water," said the Abbot, "for at the very scent of it the devil turns tail like a coward, and skeletons also, or I could watch with you, or lend you my crucifix. For myself," continued the Abbot, after a pause, "I have no fears; for the holy tooth of St. Francis, which I carry with me, would preserve me, though a thousand devils were about me."

"Oh, lend me your toe or your tooth, Holy Father, if only for a short time, for I feel in such a fright. My hair stands on end."

"You may well fear, having no holy relic. But who is your prisoner?"

"I don't know. Soldiers should have no ears nor eyes, but must simply obey

orders. I was told to look after him, as he was likely to be strung up before long."

"Unhappy prisoner," said Malvicino. "Does he know his hours are numbered? Mandolin, he has a soul. It is my business to see after his soul. I must confess him, and administer absolution."

"I was ordered not to admit any one near him," said the soldier, doggedly, whose sense of duty had now returned, and had helped to overcome his subsiding terrors.

"Your orders were right," replied Malvicino, "but I am spiritual, and not secular. Laws, you know, do not bind the Church. The man must have the ministrations of the priest. Have you not a soul, and do you not wish to be saved? This man's blood will be on you if you do not let me confess him, and you will hear his groans next to you in purgatory. We must not have him go into the next world unshriven, you understand."

"It's as much as my life is worth to disobey orders, and you know Pianesse's character."

"I fear," said Malvicino, in a trembling voice, "that the dead man's ghost will come to-night, and your prisoner will haunt you all your life, and be present with you on your death-bed. Oh, I myself feel in a cold sweat. Here I have a flask of prime Monte Fiaschoni, let me give you some to comfort you."

"Ah, that's fine stuff, that warms me; thank you, Holy Father."

"And yet you do not wish the poor wretch inside to have a drop of this to strengthen his nerves, nor to have my spiritual consolation for his soul."

"I should not mind; only I am afraid."

"Afraid! Of what?"

"Of the Marquis finding it out, and then I shall be a lost man."

"He'll never hear it; why should he? You're in much more danger from this

ghastly cold skeleton. What will you do if he puts his slimy arms round your neck ?”

“ O Virgin ! O Virgin ! that’s he. I felt something cold to my neck. Ah, there’s nothing. Holy Father, stay with me ; at least grant me absolution, and sprinkle the place with holy water.”

“ I’ll take care of you, if you’ll let me see the prisoner. Here is something that will protect you which I can lend you ;” so saying, the monk pulled out of his pocket a parchment, on which was printed in large red characters, ‘ *Pro Conversione Hæreticorum.*’

“ This will save you ; where’s my taper ? You see these great red letters, though you cannot read them. This is the colour of which devils and ghosts are afraid. If Satan should show his nose here at all, throw that in his face, and by Pope Urban VII., who was Pope for twelve days, I’m no Franciscan if he does not vanish in twelve seconds.”

"Now, give me the key, and I'll take your place for several hours. Come, if you refuse me, I'll not absolve you on your death-bed, nor will any other priest. We will cast you into the hottest place in purgatory, and keep you there ten years over your proper time."

"Holy Father, be merciful; you are right. Oh, where's the key; I can't find it? I thought I had it in my pocket. Is it on the ground? How cold it is! Oh! I'm on the stone that sweats blood."

"If you don't take care it will stain your feet, and they will never become white again, and then the bloody skeleton will clasp you, and put his shroud over your mouth, or take one of your teeth out, unless I lend you this holy tooth, or you have the red parchment which the Pope has blessed."

"Oh, lend me the tooth. Give me the paper, Holy Father. There, there's the key. I will begin my *Patens* and *Aves*

now. There, you can unlock the door. Look, I always place it there. You see where it is. You can use it when you like, but don't be long in absolving him, or the ghost may come when you're inside the cell. Where's my parchment? There, I'll clasp it fast in my right hand along with my arquebus. The Holy Father's gone in. The Virgin protect me then."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MALVICINO.

“WELCOME, executioner !” said Echard, raising his head as he beheld a figure approaching him in the glimmering light of Malvicino’s taper, “I am ready.”

“You don’t know me,” said Malvicino to himself as he entered, “though you have cause to remember me, as you may find out some day.—Ha, ha ! the scenes of La Baudène.—It’s a dangerous game I’m playing to bring them together, and I must be careful.—The old woman’s face seems black as well as her dress. Two and twenty years ago ; how time flies !”

“Son,” said Malvicino, addressing

Echard, "do you not recognize one whom you have known in better days? I have come to confess you before you die," continued he, raising his voice, so that it might be overheard by Mandolin outside.

"You may spare yourself the trouble, for I have confessed to God, and shall do no more. Think not that I would confess to such as you."

"Echard, these words of wrath do not suit your danger nor my character. By Pope Innocent, have I not been your friend? and would I not have saved that girl whom you loved?"

"Saved her! Did we not find you alone with her, and she on the rack? It must have been you who got me arrested, and who entrapped her."

"Nay, nay, judge not by the outward appearance. You are sorrowful and disappointed; you will, however, I feel sure, acquit me as regards the past, when you know what my present errand is."

“I suppose you come from the Holy Office to mock me, or to exhort me to prepare for torture.”

“No, I would do you a benefit. I have had great difficulty in getting hold of this key to enter your dungeon.”

“What benefit can you do to one for whom death is preparing? You will insult before you torture.”

“Look at this key,” replied the Abbot; “does it suggest no hopes to you? Hope is sweet you know, though death is in sight.”

“Avaunt! I distrust you. Where is your captive? Have you murdered her?” asked the prisoner in a voice husky with emotion.

“It is for her sake I came hither; I would save her. Echard, you love her.”

“What if I do? It will avail me little, for I am doomed.”

“You love her; I can enable you to save her. She is in danger.”

"In danger! Alas! yes, you mock me with the remembrance; it was you who brought her there."

"Forget the past; I have come to rescue her at the eleventh hour."

"How can I save her? Ah! I would do so at the risk of my life," murmured the captive, as a faint flush of joy overspread his pale features.

"You may save her. The Marquis saw the girl on the rack; he was so struck with her that he has taken her away from those who were labouring for her soul's salvation, and is determined to make her his own."

"I am at a loss," replied Echard, "to understand your motives; I suspect that some deeper plot lurks beneath."

"Trouble not yourself about my motives. The Marquis has insulted me, and laid the hand of violence on me, as you may see by this wound; let my revenge to him bring a benefit to you."

“What, then, can I do?” asked Echard anxiously.

“I will explain. Pianesse has determined to wed her—whether truly or falsely I cannot say. The marriage is on the eve of being celebrated; yea, this very night is fixed.”

“Oh agony!” groaned Echard. “You do not mean that the Marquis of Pianesse is going to force Ardoine to marry him? She will not consent.”

“She is helpless. There, don’t you hear the sound of music from above? I fear the marriage is taking place. Stay, I will get rid of this sentry to save trouble.”

So saying, Malvicino stepped out of the door.

“It’s all right,” he added, as he returned into the dungeon; “he has finished the flask I lent him, and he will not disturb us.”

“Oh tell me what I am to do!” said Echard, seizing Malvicino by the arm.



"We must creep up to the chapel; you must then make straight for Pïanesse, and overcome him; then carry off Ardoine. There is no one who will interfere with you save the Archbishop, with whom I overheard Pïanesse talking, and who I think is to take some part in the burlesque. Then rush straight into the convent garden, and I have taken care that the western gate is not locked to-night, so you can escape through that. You must act promptly, and without me, for I must not appear in the matter. Without me your situation is desperate. Haste, follow me, or all is lost!"

Echard arranged himself as quickly as possible, and having gently drawn the small sword out of the drunken Mandolin's belt, followed Malvicino. They silently threaded several stone passages, until they came to the door of the chapel.

"There, look there," said the Abbot, "and see if my words are true or not.

Quick! the ceremony has begun; the ring may be on her finger; the Church may claim her."


He heard no more; he looked through the chinks of the door, and the scene fired his very soul. Bursting in, with a terrific cry he rushed madly up to the high altar, absorbed with only one thought, the rescue of Ardoine.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE AVENGER.

SEIZING one of the heavy missals as he rushed onwards, Echard flung it at the Archbishop. It missed the Prelate's head, but it added to his consternation at the sudden apparition, and he fled precipitately from the scene. The intruder had taken all by surprise; the scream echoing through the chapel, and the vision of an apparent maniac were sufficiently startling in the dead of night. Springing towards the Marquis, Echard grasped him by the throat, and both fell upon the pavement. But the Marquis had not lost all the fire of youth, and was not to be overcome without a struggle. It is a

fearful thing to see two human beings in a fierce conflict, whose issues are life or death. They grasp each other with clasped hands, and strain until the sweat stands upon their brows; they pant, they roll over. The victory is doubtful. Now they struggle inside the rails, and are dashed against the altar. The Marquis is victor; he kneels upon Echard's breast; he feels about for his sword, but he cannot find it; he wrests the one which Echard had taken from Mandolin. He will not strike his adversary twice; a life of benefits rankle in the giver's heart; the taint of heresy renders the disowned accursed; the outrage at the rack can only be atoned for by blood; and now, by some strange fatality, the same cursed wretch again mars this well-concerted scheme, and would rob him of his prize upon the steps of the altar. As for the careless sentry, death should be his portion. These thoughts darted with an instantaneous flash through the mind of



Pianesse at this eventful crisis. Ardoine, who had been looking on, despite her state of horror, had prayed for the success of Echard, for she knew that she was both the cause of the struggle and that her future life would be affected by its results. Shame, suffering, and misery, or love and happiness, should it please God to roll away their present trials, hung in the balance. She held her breath, and her heart almost ceased to beat as she saw the Marquis obtaining the advantage. Fear, however, brought a reaction.

“Echard! Echard!” she exclaimed in a tone of agony, “Oh, save me—save me!—it is Ardoine who entreats you.”

The words acted like an electric shock on Echard; with a superhuman effort, of which youth and passion are alone capable, he sprang from the ground, and dashed the Marquis several paces backwards. Seizing one of the large gilt candlesticks which had been upset in the struggle,

he struck with all his might at the Marquis's head. Had the blow descended in all its force, the Marquis of Pianesse would have been a corpse. Its shock was broken by his arm, but it nevertheless struck him on the temple, and felled him insensible to the ground, while the blood poured from his mouth and ears.

"Oh, in the name of God! don't kill him!" cried out Ardoine; "save me, let us fly, let us escape. Oh, don't kill him!"

"Fear not, Ardoine, but I must render him incapable of pursuing us. Lie there, wretched man; you have brought blood and misery into hundreds of peaceful homes in the outraged name of the religion of Christ."

"Come, my beloved Ardoine, we have no time to lose; take off your cloak, then I will tear it into strips and tie his feet and hands together, so that he may not give the alarm. The Archbishop will be returning and bringing others to the rescue."

"Oh, Echard, my heart misgives me! beware of that Abbot Malvicino; it was he who captured me and placed me on the rack; oh, be careful!"

"Dear Ardoine, you are faint and weak; I will help you. Quick, let us make for the postern." Lifting her gently in his arms, he carried her from the chapel, and hastily threaded his way to the convent-garden. His breast heaved as he felt his precious burden, of whose weight he was, as it were, unconscious. He strained her to his heart, as though it was too sweet a dream, and surrendered himself to the bliss of the moment, notwithstanding the dangers by which they were still surrounded.

"Fear not," said he, bending over her face, "I am yours; God helping me I will save you; I have been true since first I saw you, and the fear of death shall never make me false. Doubt me not, for I am one with you in creed. Oh, can you in this

fearful hour cheer me with one bright word,
and tell me that you love me?"

A soft voice whispered the thrilling
words, "Echard, I love you."

Echard bent over his charge, and sealed
the confession with the first kiss, which is
among the purest raptures of unsullied love.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GARDEN OF THE CONVENT.

ECHARD and Ardoine felt refreshed by the cold night air as they stood in the garden, and looked upon the waning moon and the star-lit canopy of heaven, once more after their imprisonment. But they heard voices in the distance and immediately concealed themselves behind the shrubs, endeavouring at the same time to approach the postern which had been agreed upon. A violent altercation was taking place, and the voices of angry combatants were distinctly heard. A party, consisting of two or three soldiers, a man and a woman, passed by them in heated discussion, and

were met by some one coming out of the convent.

"Hush dearest," said Echard, "for your life. I see it all; there is double-dyed treachery. You are right; Malvicino has played us false. We must be quiet until they have gone in, and then we can gain that door which they have left open. Hush! we shall hear their plans. Let us be stealing behind these shrubs, so as to be getting as near as possible to the door, as we cannot tell what may happen."

"By Pope Clement VIII. and his congregation, *De auxiliis*," said Malvicino, coming to meet his bandits, and seeing the figure of a man and a woman among them, "you have done your work cleverly. Bring the girl this way. As for the man, dead men, you know, tell no tales."

"Well, you've given us a tough job, Holy Father, to catch this brace of lovers.

But we've got them at last, and shall be glad of our pay. This long, thin, sepulchral fellow fought more than you'd have thought. Is his friend good-looking, that's keeping him out of his bed this cold night?"

"How now, dog of a Franciscan," exclaimed Rorengo, "is this your doing? Are these your soldiers? Is an honest man to be molested at this hour of night?"

"By all the Papal Bulls," said Malvicino, "what are you doing out of your cell, Marco Aurelio Rorengo? A Dominican ought to be telling his rosary, and not bringing women into a convent on Good Friday evening. But as you assert that the Virgin was born in original sin, I doubt not this is part of your creed. Quick, soldiers, to the other postern."

"Hideous immaculate, if you are to be taken as a sample of your order, then it's the last miracle of heaven that you're

at large on earth yet. We teach that the Virgin was born like any other woman, and we cannot find your invention in early times."

"By Pope Gregory and his *Propaganda*, may Heaven direct all our Pope's anathemas against your order. You Dominicans, from your pious lives, have a horror of anything that professes to be immaculate in others. It is a virtue banished by your rules, at least it is not to be found in your practice. Are you following the practice of original or actual sin to-night, holy black friar?"

"I assert with the Holy Catholic Church that she was not immaculate," replied Rorengo, "and I'll prove it to you with my fists."


"Go on and write your historical memoirs, Marco Aurelio Rorengo, and give a chapter to to-night's adventure. It's a lucky thing for you that Leo invented indulgences, for your actual sins would have

made Tetzels fortune, and your intentional ones would have given a surplus to the Papal exchequer."

"Silence, thou whose order forms the scum of the Church. Nature has been making a generation of dwarfs, and, saving herself, to make you in a new mould, no doubt an immaculate one."

"Curse this Dominican," said Malvicino aside, "how he's spoiled my game, and I am losing my time now. Oh, where are my converts? Hideous Dominican, you had better return to your cell; and this our daughter, who if I mistake not is a nun from the adjoining convent, had better confess herself to be not immaculate. My sons," continued Malvicino, addressing his followers, "these are not my friends. They must have got out at the other door. Quick, see if they are there, and then follow them on that road in the direction of Villar. What shall I do if they have really escaped me? I must get a small troop in

the Marquis's name, to pursue after the wretch that has committed the outrage. It's a good thing that I don't appear in the matter, though I may yet gain my point. Oh madness ! if at the eleventh hour I have been disappointed. I thought there were too many links in the plot. But who could have guessed that it should have gone on so well, and then just fail out here at the very point of success. Oh may the fiends of purgatory lunch off the carcase of the cursed Dominican, who reviles the blessed Mary born without original sin. The accursed black friar ! How he triumphs over me ! O Ardoine, have I lost you at last ; and not only so, but given you your own lover, and enabled you both to escape out of the very jaws of death. Better to have left you alone, or never to have troubled my head about the Babylonish girl, and yet it was something to look at her and touch her. Ah ! if I had met such a one in early life, I might have been a virtuous man. Perdition take St.



Antony and his monks in Egypt who first put the idea of celibacy into the Church's head ! and yet by all the Popes they've not minded the dogma much, I trow."

With these reflections Malvicino entered the convent to disguise his share in the plot, and to organize measures for the recapture of the fugitives.

Echard and Ardoine stood breathless as they heard the preceding conversation, and realized the imminent danger in which they were placed. At length, when the soldiers had sallied forth by the other postern, and Malvicino had entered the convent, they stole forth. They made for the gate through which Rorengo had entered. It is closed, but the door is not locked. They cross its threshold. They stand outside the gloomy walls and look towards the heights of Angrogna, whither they will flee. They clasp each other once more in a strained embrace. The traces of their past sorrows are swept away. They look up to heaven, and smile

as they thank God in their hearts with an emphasis which only captives lately exposed to death could feel.

God speed them, they are free !

END OF VOL. II.

APPENDIX.

CHAPTER I.

THE antiquity and connection of the Waldensian with the Primitive Church, is attested by the ancient Vaudois MS., in the Romance language, deposited in the libraries of Lyons, Grenoble, Geneva, Trinity College, Dublin, and the University of Cambridge. The subject is treated by Morland, Léger, Allix, Muston, Monastier, and more fully by Dr. Gilly, in his Waldensian researches. Many commentators on prophecy—to wit, Bishop Lloyd, Newton, Boyer, Arnaud, Fleury, Acland, Whiston, Faber, Elliott—maintain that this church is one of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. xi.—See *Faber*, vol. ii., book v., ch. ii.

CHAPTER II.

THE Council of the *Propaganda* was instituted by Gregory XV., 1622, and in 1650 took the additional clause of “*et extirpandis Hæreticis.*” It is a fact that the bloody massacre of Easter, 1655, was settled in the deliberations of the Council of the *Propaganda* of Turin. The banner described was one of those used by the Inquisition in Spain. The “supplications” of the Waldensian Churches to the Duke, Madame Royale, and to the Marquis of Pianesse, after Gastaldo’s edict, are given by Morland, book

ii., chap. v., "the true originals whereof are to be seen in the publick library of the famous University of Cambridge."

CHAPTER V.

THE whole of these speeches are the true speeches of Christian martyrs, many of which have been disintombed from old MSS. by the diligence of Dr. Muston, of Bordeaux.—See his *Israel of the Alps*, vol. i., pages 59, 61, 62, 81, 90, 103, 106, 113, 121, 163, 202. As being the real utterances of Christian martyrs, they have a moral value, and are at least precious bequests to posterity from the Inquisition.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS chapter is founded on a real incident, and took place in 1560, in the town of Carignan. The man was a French fugitive, named Mathurin, and his wife, Joan, a Vaudois.—See *Israel of the Alps*, vol. i., chap. viii., page 123. The conversation introduced into the text is quoted almost *verbatim* as it took place.

CHAPTER VII.

THE two pastors, Aquit and Gros, apostatized through fear of death, and their subsequent repentance and abjuration of Romanism (see *Léger*, part ii., page 65), forms a most affecting document. It was publicly read by them before the Churches whose ministers they had been once. Page 70. This certificate was sent to the University of Cambridge by Sir Samuel Morland, as also the parchment alluded to in chap. xxxiv. They are now lost. Page 80.—For the royal

edict, promising one hundred crowns to any one who gave *clandestine* evidence against a Vaudois, see *Léger*, part ii., page 61 ; *Morland*, book ii., page 27.

CHAPTER X.

NOR one single detail of this chapter is exaggerated, as may be abundantly verified by the notarial depositions, collected by Sir Samuel Morland and Léger. The hint about the gossip of the Inquisition is taken from *The History of the Inquisition and Bower*.

“The hereditary feud between the Franciscans and Dominicans, and between the Jesuits and Jansenists was proverbial, and is the best proof that the Church of Rome, who would purchase ‘uniformity’ even by fire, the sword, and the rack, cannot command spiritual ‘unity’ even among her own professed disciples.”

Extract from the Bull of Innocent VIII.—“We, therefore, having determined to use all our endeavours, and to imploy all our care, as we are bound by the duty of our pastoral charge, to root up and extirpate such a detestable sect, and the foresaid execrable errors, that they may not spread further, and that the hearts of believers may not be damnably perverted from the Catholick Church ; and to repress such rash undertakings,” etc.—The translation is from *Sir Sam. Morland’s History*, p. 199.

Page 113.

Come, Holy Ghost, send down those beams,
Which sweetly flow in silent streams
From thy bright throne above.
Oh grant thy faithful, dearest Lord,

Whose only hope is thy sure word,
 The seven gifts of thy Spirit.
 Grant us in life to obey thy grace,
 Grant us in death to see thy face,
 And endless joy inherit. Amen.

The number of the victims of the Inquisition who perished in Spain from 1481, under Torquemada, to 1665, under Philip IV., was—burnt alive, 33,412; burnt in effigy, 15,743; condemned to the galleys or to prison, 272,514.

CHAPTER XI.

THIS incident actually took place.—*Léger*, part ii., page 132, line 14. With reference to these two chapters, see the remonstrances of the various states to the Court of Savoy, Cromwell's letters, and Morland's official speech to the Duke of Savoy, referred to hereafter.

CHAPTER XII.

FOR the history and chronology of these days (to which I have adhered closely), see *Muston*, vol. i., part ii., chap. vii. Nearly all the incidental allusions are historical, and many of the speeches in the actors mouths are their veritable words. With the exception of chapters xxvii. and xxviii. (which are historical), the last half of this volume is concerned with the dramatic unity and development of the plot, and cannot, therefore, be substantiated by references.

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